

**United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)
Twenty-fourth annual session**

**High-level Roundtable on
“The role of science, technology, and innovation in a sustainable and resilient recovery
from the COVID-19 pandemic”**

17 May 2021, 15.00-16.00 ([CEST](#))

Concept note

Background

The Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) provides a unique platform for countries to share experiences and advance an international agenda to harness science, technology and innovation (STI) to address longstanding and emerging development challenges.

The critical role of STI in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic is unquestionable and will be equally important in re-building healthcare systems and socio-economic structures. While frontier technologies, some of which are used to respond to the pandemic (such as artificial intelligence, big data, and robotics), offer a window of opportunity for developing countries to leapfrog previous technological paradigms and transform their economies and societies, developing countries in general are not ready to apply these technologies particularly in the case of the least developed countries. There is a serious risk that frontier technologies may exacerbate existing inequalities or creates new ones. In fact the current pandemic has already highlighted many manifestations of profound digital inequalities within and among countries.

Proactive policy interventions, the mobilization of all stakeholders and international cooperation are needed to set the direction of STI advances towards a sustainable and resilient recovery from the pandemic.

Objectives of the roundtable

The roundtable will provide an opportunity for high-level policymakers to exchange experiences, lessons learned and good practices, and to discuss challenges faced at national, regional, and international levels as well as possible solutions to address them. The outcome of the session will contribute to the high-level political forum (HLPF) on sustainable development under the auspices of ECOSOC, which will be held from 6 to 15 July 2021. The HLPF will discuss Sustainable Development Goals 1 on no poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 3 on good health and well-being, 8 on decent work and economic growth, 10 on reduced inequalities, 12 on responsible consumption and production, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships in depth.

Three key questions are proposed to guide the discussion of the roundtable:

- How can the international community foster partnerships with developing countries to promote science and technology collaborations, particularly to enhance their technical and productive capabilities in SDG-related technologies?
- How can governments formulate transformative policy shifts to ensure that the technological divide and digital inequalities can be reduced to not leave anyone behind?
- How can the international community secure firm commitments to mobilize substantial resources to increase the technological capabilities of developing countries, to enable their sustainable and resilient recovery?

Format of the roundtable

The Commission secretariat will make a short presentation on the findings of the recent UNCTAD publication – *Technology and Innovation Report 2021*. This will be followed by the remarks of the Co-Chair of the STI Forum. After which, the high-level discussants will make their initial interventions (5-7 mins), before the Chair will initiate an interactive discussion between the participants, including those from the floor.