

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

**High-level Roundtable on
“Using science, technology and innovation to close the gap on Sustainable Development
Goal 3 on good health and well-being”**

18 May 2021, 14.00-16.00 ([CEST](#))

Concept note

Background

The twenty-third annual session of the CSTD selected “Using science, technology and innovation to close the gap on SDG 3, good health and well-being” as one of the priority themes for its twenty-fourth session (2020-2021 period).

Science, technology, and innovation (STI) play an essential role in strengthening the capacity of all countries in providing high-quality primary healthcare, addressing poverty-related diseases, and early warning, risk reduction, and management of infectious diseases. STI includes not only scientific and technical innovations but also well-established “low-tech” solutions and organizational and social innovations applied in health care. New developments in artificial intelligence, digital health, gene-editing, and other technologies can transform health and medicine and support countries in their responses to health crises and preparedness for future threats. However, some of the new and emerging technologies raised critical concerns about digital divides, privacy, security, and accuracy of artificial intelligence in health care.

STI supported developing and deploying a whole range of COVID-19-related interventions like diagnostics, treatment, and vaccines. While significant STI resources in health are directed to the ongoing pandemic, we should not forget about other diseases, like neonatal and maternal conditions, malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS, that disproportionately affect poor people especially in developing countries.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the pressing need for countries to focus more on elevating STI in both policy and practical terms. But governments also need to make sure that the development benefits of STI translate directly into the daily lives of people all over the world. Moreover, it is vital to ensure that all countries have equal access to the benefits of life-saving treatments, not only for the pandemic but also for poverty-related diseases, future health emergencies, and infectious disease outbreaks.

Objective and guiding questions

The objective of the high-level roundtable is to explore national and international experiences about using STI to strengthen health outcomes and approaches to regional and global STI cooperation in this field. In addition, the roundtable will seek to address the following questions:

- How can policymakers leverage new and existing STI applications to strengthen healthcare systems and provide higher quality health care for all? How can we be more effective in mobilizing STI in national health systems?
- How can we ensure equal access to the benefits of STI in healthcare during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, especially to provide solutions to diseases that disproportionately affect poor people in developing countries?
- What are the particular features of health innovation systems, and how health systems may be organized and managed to become more inclusive towards marginalized groups?
- What are the developments in frontier technologies that can provide opportunities for developing countries to accelerate their efforts to strengthen their national health systems and continue to push back poverty-related diseases? Conversely, what are the main risks associated with frontier technologies in health care?
- What are best practices, at the national level, for developing digital health care? What are lessons learned for the successful digitalization of health care systems involving multiple stakeholders?
- What actions can the international community, including the CSTD, take to embrace STI to close the gap on SDG 3, good health, and well-being?

Format of the high-level roundtable

The roundtable will begin with the introduction of the Report of the Secretary-General E/CN.16/2021/2 by the CSTD Secretariat. Following the introduction, high-level discussants will make initial interventions (5-7 minutes), broadly addressing the guiding questions. Afterward, the Moderator will initiate an interactive discussion among the participants, including those from the floor.

Background document

- UNCTAD (2021): Report of the Secretary-General on using science, technology and innovation to close the gap on Sustainable Development Goal 3, good health and well-being (E/CN.16/2021/2), https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ecn162021d2_en.pdf.