

Opening green windows: Technological opportunities for a low-carbon world

Perspectives from Africa

24 May 2023 (14:00 to 15:30 Geneva, 15:00 to 16:30 Addis Ababa)

Concept note

Objective

This webinar co-organized by UNCTAD and ECA will present UNCTAD's [Technology and Innovation Report 2023](#), followed by a panel discussion by experts and policymakers. The discussion will be centered around policies, investment and other interventions moving forward for African countries to strategically position themselves to take advantage of green windows of opportunity in the context of economic diversification, African Continental Free Trade Area, green recovery, climate change and other crises. The event will serve as a platform for peer learning and awareness raising of policy options and other measures to harness the frontier technologies to achieve inclusive economic growth, climate resilience, environmental sustainability and just transitions.

Background

The world is facing pressing social and economic challenges of unprecedented nature. In particular, the climate crisis is a global challenge that calls for global solutions. As of 2023, carbon emissions are at a record high, reflecting historical growth patterns sourced by fossil fuels and a lack of political will to transition towards renewable energies. Governments are facing complex trade-offs between promoting inclusive and green and climate-resilient economic growth.

Green technologies provide transformative solutions to achieve these objectives. Green technologies are usually associated with renewable energy technologies but also include the strategic use of traditional and new digital technologies like blockchain, artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things. They enable cleaner and more efficient production, as well as offer opportunities for economic diversification, creating a synergy between economic development and climate change mitigation.

Green transformation, supported by frontier technologies, offers a viable route for countries in Africa to claim agency in their development narrative and move from crisis to sustainable development. To benefit from the green technology revolution, strong government efforts are needed to take strategic, long-term action to build innovation and technological capacities to spur sustainable economic growth and increase their resilience to future crises. Moreover, to ensure that green transformation is just and does not exacerbate inequalities, all key stakeholders, including SMEs, investors, and civil societies, should be involved for Africa to attain low-to-zero carbon emissions.

Technology and Innovation Report 2023

UNCTAD's *Technology and Innovation Report 2023* "Opening green windows: Technological opportunities for a low-carbon world" analyses the opportunities presented by the green transition and the technologies associated with it. By unleashing green innovations, countries can have access to 'green windows of opportunity' for not only building resilience and climate change mitigation mechanisms but also for spurring

economic growth and technological development. These opportunities can particularly support developing countries to “leap” out of the series of crises and move forward.

The Report has three key messages. Firstly, developing countries must strategically position themselves to embrace the green technological revolution early. Secondly, the international community needs to step up in gathering enough resources and building the required know-how to support developing countries to take advantage of the green windows of opportunity. Lastly, agency and urgency are pivotal in the fight against climate change and inequalities.

Expected outcomes of the webinar

- Briefing on the Technology and Innovation Report 2023 by underlining the three key messages emphasized in the report;
- Identifying challenges that African governments have faced or may face in promoting green technology and innovation to contribute to national development priorities and accelerate the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals;
- Indicating strategies and policies that governments, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders should adopt to harness the full potential of green technologies;
- Identifying areas where and how could the international community support African countries in leveraging green technologies for a low-carbon world; and
- Indicating possible roadmap and strategies for African countries to take advantage of the green technology revolution to build a greener, smarter, more resilience, inclusive and sustainable society

Format

This webinar is part of a set of events conducted to disseminate the findings of the Technology and Innovation Report 2023 to a broader audience comprised of policymakers, international organisations, academia, the private sector, and other stakeholders. It will be comprised of an introduction of the Technology and Innovation Report 2023 followed by a moderated panel discussion by experts and policymakers on the ways to leverage technologies for a low-carbon world. After discussion, the floor will be opened to questions and contributions from the audience (via chat function). The event will be conducted in English (without translation) on the Zoom online platform.

Guiding questions for discussion

- What are the key impact frontier green technologies available to African countries to utilise green windows of opportunity?
- What are the priority Africa’s green technologies given its quest for economic diversification, green and climate resilient growth and green value chains?
- What peculiar and success stories in Africa can be mentioned to showcase the real impacts of green technologies for a low-carbon world?
- How can African countries take advantage of the green technology revolution to build a greener, smarter, more resilient, inclusive and sustainable society?
- What are the challenges that governments have faced or may face in promoting green technology and innovation to contribute to national development priorities and accelerate the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals?
- What should governments, the private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders do to harness the full potential of these technologies? In particular, how could public policies and innovative financing models promote local access to green technologies in view of the constraints of finance and infrastructure?

- What are the existing and emerging initiatives that African countries can leverage to drive green technology innovation, access and deployment to boost inclusive green and climate-resilient growth?
- How could the international community support African countries in this regards?
- How can Africa leverage digital technology to guarantee that green transformation is just and does not exacerbate inequalities?
- How can Africa ensure low carbon emissions while implementing the African Digital Transformation Strategy 2020-2030?
- What can Africa learn and adopt from other regions to fast-track the green transformation in the region?
- What is required for African countries to ensure endogenous capacity to innovate and generate green technologies to drive the transition to inclusive, green and climate-resilient economies?