



## **Developing Innovative Capabilities for Sustainable Development**

Side event of the High-Level Political Forum 2023

Online via the Zoom platform

*10 July 2023 (8:00 to 9:30 New York, 14:00 to 15:30 Geneva)*

### **Concept note**

#### **Background**

Achieving climate compatible economic and human development will require significant innovation, both in terms of technologies and policies. Innovative policies and technologies can offer a route for countries to upgrade their productive capabilities and advance their catching-up process by deploying cleaner production processes and products. These opportunities can support countries to “leap” out of the cascade of crises and move toward the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels. If countries are to capture the economic gains associated with these opportunities, they must have the required capabilities, including not just scientific or technical skills, but also the necessary policies, regulations and infrastructure that together make up the enabling environment.

#### **Objective**

With reference to UNCTAD's [Technology and Innovation Report 2023](#) and UNEP's [International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure](#), this side event will present successful examples of national and regional initiatives on promoting clean energy and examine instruments that foster a more collaborative approach for green innovation. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals 7 and 9, the event will highlight good practices that support the use, adoption and adaptation of green technologies, as well as innovative approaches that integrate sustainability into infrastructure policymaking at the systems-level. This side-event will serve as a platform for peer learning and awareness raising of policy options to develop innovative capabilities for sustainable development. The event will look at the case of Portugal in view of its second Voluntary National Review (VNR). As a country traditionally reliant on energy imports, Portugal has successfully implemented policies to promote renewable energy production, enhance energy efficiency and strengthen energy resilience.

#### **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.

### **International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure**

The 10 International Good Practice Principles for Sustainable Infrastructure are designed to help policymakers take needs-based, systems-level, integrated approaches to planning and delivering sustainable infrastructure. Put simply, this means a) taking service needs as a starting point and looking at how to meet those needs most effectively and sustainably, using all available options, including alternatives to building new grey infrastructure; b) targeting sustainability interventions in the enabling environment and strategic planning phases of the infrastructure lifecycle, “upstream” of the individual project level; and c) recognizing both built and natural infrastructure assets a part of a broader interdependent “system of systems” and planning infrastructure in a way that recognizes and manages tradeoffs and maximizes synergies for more effective service delivery and multiple additional co-benefits.

The principles have been recognized by UN Member States as an effective guidance for implementing UN Environment Assembly Resolutions 4/5 and 5/9 on sustainable and resilient infrastructure. However, putting them into practice will require the use of innovative new technologies and approaches to planning and policy development, and a change to the way that we think about delivering services through infrastructure development.

### **Voluntary National Review 2023 of Portugal**

As demonstrated by its second VNR, Portugal has made significant strides towards the achievement of SDG 7. Portugal has achieved universal access to electricity, ensuring 100% of its population has access to reliable power. It has also accomplished significant progress in the use of clean energy. Surpassing established targets, Portugal attained a record share of 34.0% in renewable energy consumption in 2021, having since set an ambitious goal of reaching 80% renewables in its electricity production mix by 2026. Portugal’s experience shows that using endogenous resources to achieve reliable, clean, and competitively priced energy not only enhances supply security but also fosters investment and job creation in the green transition sector. Simultaneously, there have been advances in improving energy efficiency performance, resulting in a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

Portugal's energy transition objectives go beyond climate goals, covering such vital aspects as energy supply security, leveraging endogenous resources, promoting reindustrialization, economic development and job creation. The adoption of the Climate Law in 2021 reflects this, promoting renewable energy integration, energy efficiency, and fighting energy poverty. Furthermore, strategic initiatives like the Long-Term Building Renovation Strategy, the National Hydrogen Strategy, and the Long-Term Strategy for Combating Energy Poverty reinforce Portugal's commitment to sustainable energy practices. The National Energy and Climate Plan 2030 (PNEC 2030) and the National Low Carbon Roadmap 2050 (RNC 2050) also play significant roles in driving the country's sustained energy transition efforts.

## **Format**

This side-event co-organized by UNCTAD and UNEP and co-sponsored by Portugal will be comprised of two presentations followed by a moderated panel discussion by experts on the ways to develop innovative capabilities for sustainable development. 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 major challenges that prevent countries from developing innovative capacities and seizing the opportunities presented by green technologies to contribute to national development priorities and accelerate the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals?
- What are the examples of successful national, subregional and regional initiatives that could be up-scaled to promote the adoption of clean energy, integrate sustainability into infrastructure policymaking and foster a more collaborative approach for green innovation?
- What should the international community, government, private sector, civil society, and other stakeholders do to harness the full potential of green technologies and sustainable infrastructure while minimizing risks and reducing inequalities?