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Statement submitted by

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Opening Remarks by Ms. Isabelle Durant,

Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD

CSTD 2019–2020 Inter-sessional Panel

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Dear Delegates,

- I am very pleased to open this Inter-sessional panel of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD).
- What binds us all in this same place today is ***a deep commitment to harness Science & Technology as a critical enabler for sustainable development, in the spirit of multilateralism and international cooperation.***
- As you know, the two priority themes for the 2019-2020 period are "Harnessing rapid technological change for inclusive and sustainable development" and "Exploring space technologies for sustainable development and the benefits of international research collaboration in this context."
- The findings and recommendations of the Panel will be considered at the 23rd session of the CSTD to be held in March 2020.
- The secretariat has prepared draft papers on both priority themes. We hope that with your expertise, with your feedback, you will help us enrich and further improve the texts so that they provide the best possible background for the substantive discussions that will take place at the 23rd session.
- In addition, this Panel will examine issues related to the follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

Theme 1

- The first priority theme on "Harnessing rapid technological change for inclusive and sustainable development" reflects on the ongoing work to investigate how rapid technological change is impacting societies, economies and the environment.

- The discussion of this theme puts the emphasis on how innovative business models, which use recent technologies, can contribute to achieving inclusive and sustainable development.
- The issues paper discusses characteristics for sustainable and inclusive business models using a small sample of business ideas. The paper identifies three elements:
    - Many promising concepts are digitally enabled. This ranges from mobile money financial services, farming with Internet-of-Things components, telemedicine to off-grid energy solutions and mobile phones turned postal addresses.
    - Inclusive business models ease access to low-income customers by rethinking their approach from a pure sales perspective to establishing prolonged customer relationships through offering additional services, for instance funding, maintenance or continued advice services.
    - While these businesses can contribute to inclusiveness and sustainability, they have a profit motive. They address this by aiming at large customer bases and by making service and product delivery as efficient as possible to increase their margins.
- In addition to offering access to consumption, modern technology has evolved into an indirect system of checks and balances that empowers the poor by making them better informed and connected which limits the scope for abuse of power (i.e. through poverty premiums).
- The important role for STI policies remains to establish an appropriate enabling environment, to ensure ethical treatment of personal information and to establish international collaboration to maximize the benefits of frontier technologies across the globe.

Theme 2

- The second priority theme deals with Earth observations, satellite communications, navigation, and other technologies that are helping

countries and communities deliver on key sustainable development issues.

- This Panel will discuss numerous development-oriented applications of space technologies, from building resilience and reducing exposure to disasters (Goal 1) to monitoring health risks like air pollution (Goal 3); from supporting infrastructure mapping and monitoring (Goal 9) to tracking fishing activities in oceans (Goal 14).
- New technological developments are driving down the costs to use, adopt, and adapt space science and technology. These developments make it possible to derive automated insights from satellite imagery for poverty monitoring and agricultural applications and expand the collaboration opportunities between citizens and space agencies, programs, and initiatives in both developed and least developing countries to fill data gaps for a range of applications.
- Existing bottlenecks in the use of space applications for the SDGs include:
    - lack of awareness concerning the benefits of space technologies;
    - high costs and lack of financial resources to develop space programs, especially in developing countries;
    - technology and skill gaps to develop, use and adapt space technologies;
    - challenges with respect to user needs, access to and compatibility of the available data sets; geographical constraints for developing space launch facilities and conducting astronomical research; and
    - emerging issues concerning regulations and the international governance of space commons.
- National and regional policies and strategies to support space for the SDGs could include:

    (1) efforts to build capabilities, improve infrastructure and increase public awareness;

    (2) public-private partnerships; and

    (3) open data and open science policies for geospatial data.

WSIS

- Regarding the follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), it is important to note that in 2018, that the nature of the information society has changed profoundly since WSIS. Despite all the important progress that has been made in access, use and applications of ICTs, much more needs to be done to ensure that the benefits and development opportunities of digital innovations are available to all.

- Rapid technological change, **especially the emergence of the platform economy,** is accelerating the digitalization of a wide variety of occupations, and it is likely to drive further, more extensive changes in employment.

- Last June the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, established by the UN Secretary General, presented its recommendations in this regard. We at UNCTAD are keen to engage in the follow-up process to the panel's recommendations including through capacity-building mechanisms. **Clearly the CSTD is a major platform that member States and stakeholders should use to strengthen and develop digital cooperation for development.**

Capacity building is key and is needed – UNCTAD offers to help

- It goes without saying that, strengthening STI policy capacity in developing countries is central to improving STI performance in support of sustainable development.

- UNCTAD, as the secretariat of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, has worked with the Government of China to strengthen South-South cooperation in the area of science, technology and innovation.

- In 2018, this collaboration developed a new set of customized training courses on science, technology and innovation capacity-building.

- The workshops have established a STI south-south cooperation platform for participating countries.

- Participants highly appraised the workshops as opening a window in science technology and innovation development.
- **UNCTAD is actively seeking new opportunities to leverage the CSTD as a platform for facilitating all forms of cooperation among members in the field of STI for development.**

Closing

- We look forward for active engagement and discussions, which will help UNCTAD to shape the next session of the CSTD and prepare the UN SG reports on the priority themes.