

**INTERSESSIONAL PANEL OF THE UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION
ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

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Opening Session: CSTD 2020-2021 Inter-Sessional Panel Meeting

Welcoming remarks by

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Welcoming Remarks by
Ms. Shamika N. Sirimanne
Director, Division on Technology and Logistics
Head of the CSTD Secretariat
2020-2021 CSTD Inter-sessional Panel
18 January 2021

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen,

I warmly welcome you to the 2020-2021 Inter-sessional Panel of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD).

Let me begin by thanking member states for their contributions to the issue papers. 15 countries submitted highly relevant inputs on the two priority themes which provide critical national examples.

Since the twenty third annual session of the Commission, which was held in June last year, UNCTAD has been diligently working on numerous outputs related to science, technology, and innovation policy, including ICT policy analysis. These outputs are instrumental to supporting the efforts of developing countries to harness science and technology in the fight against the pandemic, as well as to build back better in its aftermath, with a view to addressing other persisting sustainable development challenges, including climate change, food insecurity, energy insecurity and social inequality, to name a few.

- Next month, we will be launching the latest edition of the Technology and Innovation Report, which focuses on the impact of frontier technologies on inequality and will propose policies to promote innovation with equity.

- We are also progression with our project on technology assessment in Africa, which focuses on agricultural and energy sectors. Three countries from the continent have already expressed their interest to participate in this project and a launch event was held last month during the Science Forum South Africa.
- We have now completed the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Reviews (STIP Reviews) for the Dominican Republic and Uganda. We are also making good progress on the STIP for Zambia, which we expect to conclude by the annual session of the Commission. And we have launched follow-up work on the STIP Reviews of Ethiopia and Uganda.
- UNCTAD also continues to provide substantive policy advice to the Tech-Access Partnership (TAP) led by the UN Technology Bank for LDCs. As you will be aware, the TAP was launched at the start of the pandemic to react to the shortage of essential COVID-related medical equipment such as PPEs and ventilators, and to help build productive capacity of these items in developing countries to help ease import shortages.
- Concerning the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) we are leading the workstream on capacity building and actively involved in the one on technology road-mapping. On general TFM matters we continue our close collaboration with DESA as co-conveners of the IATF, on the support to the STI Forum and to the 10 Member Group of the TFM, with whom we'll be meeting to hear their views about on the papers we have prepared on the priority themes.

From our ICT policy analysis work, we have continued work on eTrade readiness assessments, and they have now extended beyond LDCs, with Iraq being the first non-LDC to have been assessed.

- Our analysis has shown that the COVID-19 pandemic has led to significant growth in e-commerce, with likely long-term impacts on consumer and business behaviour.
- Our work has also underlined the importance to addressing remaining digital divides and other bottlenecks for countries trailing behind in the digital economy to be able to catch up.
- And I'm pleased to say that the next eCommerce Week is scheduled to be held in Abu Dhabi this coming October.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This event indeed comes at a critical juncture for the world, as we embark upon two important challenges.

- Firstly, science has produced results to enabled us to have a fighting chance in what we hope will be the final battle against the COVID-19 pandemic this year. We are embarking upon the largest mass vaccination campaign that the world has ever seen. But we must ensure that the fruits of science and technology can reach everyone in every country to have meaningful impacts.
- And secondly, as we edge closer to 2030 in the Decade of Action to deliver the Global Goals. Progress is being made in many places, but overall, action to meet the Goals is not yet advancing at the speed or scale required.

Let me stop here. And I would like to wish all participants a productive inter-sessional panel. I eagerly await following the important discussions that will be taking place during the week.

Thank you.