

Multi-year Expert Meeting on Investment, Innovation and Entrepreneurship  
for Productive Capacity-building and Sustainable Development, tenth session

***Recent developments, challenges, and opportunities in sustainable  
economic diversification***

Room XXVI, 27 September 2023, 10:00 – 11:00

**Opening Remarks**

**Pedro Manuel Moreno**

**Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD**

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear experts,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The cascading crisis gripping the world threaten the hard-won development gains and challenge the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

At the mid-point of the 2030 deadline, only 15% of the SDGs are on track. As a matter of fact, we are moving backward and not forward on several SDGs:

- Poverty has increased, not decreased. We are back at 2017 levels.
- Hunger is increasing for the first time in decades.
- Gender equality is nearly 300 years away.

We need immediate action to change course, and this amidst the biggest threat to humanity: Climate change.

We cannot build a more resilient, inclusive and sustainable world without transforming economies.

And technology, especially green technology, plays a central role in this process. Green technologies offer enormous opportunities to boost productivity, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve livelihoods. Just think about the power of solar photovoltaic technology, wind energy, electric vehicles, biogas, or biomass.

Technological revolutions have always instigated change and disruptions. We are now at the beginning of a green technological revolution – a wave that can boost economic diversification, trade expansion, job creation and sustainable development.

This is reflected in the growing market size of green technologies. That market is estimated to grow from 0.6 trillion US dollars in 2020 to more than 2 trillion USD in 2030, thus more than tripling.

But at present, few developing countries are competitive in green technology supply chains to take advantage. While total exports of green technologies from developed countries increased by 160% between 2018 and 2021, those of developing nations increased “only” by 30%.

The problem is that missing out on a new technology wave can create a gap between the leaders and the rest that may never be closed.

UNCTAD’s frontier technology readiness index shows that many developing countries, especially countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and Sub-Saharan Africa, are missing the wave of green technology. And this will widen inequalities.

But policy can change this path by improving countries’ preparedness to use, adopt and adapt frontier technologies.

Governments must be proactive in boosting technical skills and scaling up investment in research and development and infrastructure. This requires implementing timely innovation, industrial and energy policies.

History has shown us that the window of opportunity to ride on a technology revolution is time-bound. The green technology revolution is no exception. Thus, developing countries need to act fast with sound government policies and private sector initiatives that help countries to catch the wave and foster sustainable economic diversification.

And this brings me to my last point: cooperation.

Support from the international community is vital to support developing countries to build innovation capabilities and the necessary technologies.

One fundamental aspect is access to technology. On the one hand this calls for facilitating trade of green technology goods. On the other hand, it requires flexibilities in the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights for environmentally sound technologies to facilitate technology and knowledge transfer.

We also need more global efforts to accelerate the development and deployment of green technologies through broader research collaboration.

And the transformations can simply not happen without significantly more resources and funding with better – meaning foremost concessional - terms. But at present, many developing countries are unable to invest in climate adaptation as they are constrained by the heavy burdens of their public debt. And they face terrible dilemmas between servicing their debt, servicing their people or saving the planet.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Global Sustainable Development Report launched two weeks ago ahead of the SDGs Summit had a clear message: We cannot achieve the SDGs without active mobilization of political leadership and ambition for science-based transformations.

This expert group meeting is precisely aligned with this message.

Without decisive action, targeted investment and international cooperation, the benefits of the green technology revolution will only be for a few and leave behind a more unequal world. But this can be different, and your deliberations help to make the difference.

Thank you for your attention.