

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

**Geneva, Switzerland
21-22 October 2024**

Contribution by the Gambia

**to the CSTD 2024-2025 priority theme on “Diversifying economies in a world of
accelerated digitalization”**

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PRIORITY THEME 1: Diversifying economies in a world of accelerated digitalization

United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)

Dear CSTD Member

The [27th CSTD annual session](#) selected “Diversifying economies in a world of accelerated digitalization” as one of the priority themes for its 28th session (2024-25 period). This theme directly addresses SDG 9 “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation” at the 2030 Agenda.

Although the contribution of science, technology and innovation (STI) to the achievement of other sustainable development goals (SDGs) is discussed in every session of the CSTD, its role in upgrading and diversifying industrial capabilities and the linkages with industrial policies have not been specifically addressed for several years in the Commission. Economic diversification, including through the upgrading of industrial capabilities, is an essential component of economic development and a key area of SDG 9, which aims at enhancing scientific research and accelerating technological upgrade of industries through innovation, particularly in developing countries.

Under this priority theme the Commission could discuss challenges and opportunities brought about the rise of new digital technologies, as Artificial Intelligence, for industrial and innovation policies aiming at increasing productive capacities and diversifying the industrial structure toward higher value productions to benefit all while preserving cultural identity, including indigenous knowledge. The accelerating pace at which frontier technologies emerge and develop makes policymakers struggle to navigate and design responsive policies. Under this theme, the Commission can examine the challenges and opportunities specific to countries at different level of development, and what can least developed countries do to face the disproportionate challenges they face; work to identify best practices and inform inclusive policies for innovation and economic diversification; discuss how to leverage international cooperation to guarantee that uneven technological capabilities will not worsen inequality.

The CSTD secretariat is in the process of drafting an issues paper on the theme to be presented at the CSTD inter-sessional panel meeting to be held in the second half of October 2024 in Geneva. In this context, we would like to solicit inputs from CSTD member States on this theme. We would be grateful if you could kindly answer the following questions based on your experience in your country.

1. What are the specific challenges your economy is facing to develop or adapt frontier technologies and AI?

- **Low prioritization of R&D in the past in the Gambia Gross Domestic Expenditure on Research and Experimental Development (GERD) 2018 - 0.017 % of GDP**
 - **GERD of The Gambia (0.017% of the GDP) is distant to the 1% of the GDP recommended in the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024**
 - **Unreliable data collection systems and statistical data on STI in particular.**
 - **Inadequate infrastructure to support technology development**
 - **Low adoption of technology related to literacy levels and resistance to change (cultural and societal**
2. Can you provide successful examples of AI and other frontier technologies uptake in your country?

3. Has your country put in place inclusive policies for innovation and economic diversification specifically tailored to diffusion of digital technologies and AI?

Science, Technology and innovation Policy 2015-2024 - The priority sectors defined in this Policy are medicine and public health ; Trade and Industry, innovation and Entrepreneurship ; Energy ; agriculture, the Environment and Natural resources ; transportation ; national Security ; sports and Recreation ; Tourism, Recreation and hospitality ; and youth and innovation

Strategy for promoting technology-enabled education (TEE) & Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) 2021-2024- which is a pillar of the Information and Communication Technology for Development Policy Statement 2018-2028

4. Do you have examples of policy instruments in place to favour the diffusion of frontier technologies in the economy and targeting specific sectors?
- **Science, Technology and innovation Policy 2015-2024**
5. Has your country put in place mechanisms to strengthen industrial capabilities through partnerships among different stakeholders (e.g., university-industry, or private-public)?

The government has adopted a whole of society to approach to the advancement technology across all sectors; it has done this through inclusive technical working groups, and adoption of MoUs with academic institutions and private sector to ensure effective implementation of initiatives

6. How can international cooperation support the uptake of new technologies and the development of technological capabilities in your country and ensure that industrial policies will benefit all and do not worsen inequality?

Given the scarcity of resources (financial and technical), the Gambia strongly leans on strategic international alliances to support effective program implementation. The country actively pursues bilateral and multilateral initiatives for effective benchmarking and importantly to drive local research and innovation initiatives in digital technologies and other emerging markets/industries

7. What can do the UN CSTD to support an economic transformation that enhances your country productive capabilities and foster an inclusive digital transformation?

The UN CSTD can provide impactful support to the Gambia to build responsive policy, strategy and regulatory frameworks that foster rapid adoption and provide the requisite structures that enable local frontier solutions to thrive and contribute meaningfully to socioeconomic development.

Please indicate contact person(s) responsible for projects/policies and international collaboration in this context in case we need clarification on the inputs.

Mr. Hassan S. Gaye, Deputy Permanent Secretary- hsgaye@mocde.gov.gm
Assan LS Jammeh, Principal Planner – alsjammeh@mocde.gov.gm

Please send your responses and any further inputs on the theme to the CSTD secretariat (stdev@unctad.org) by **24 July 2024**. We look forward to receiving your valuable inputs.

Sincere regards,

CSTD secretariat