

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

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Contribution by ESCWA

to the CSTD 2024-2025 priority theme on “Technology foresight and technology
assessment for sustainable development”

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ESCWA Input to CSTD, PRIORITY THEME 2

Technology foresight and technology assessment for sustainable development

1. Has your organization conducted ForSTI, TA or both for developing countries? If yes, what were the reasons for undertaking ForSTI and TA? And what have been some important ForSTI and TA examples undertaken by your organization?

Under its megatrends series, aiming at providing member states public policy options to optimise the positive impact of emerging technology on Arab countries, ESCWA has undertaken two studies, one focusing on e-mobility and the second on metaverse. It is currently undertaking a third study on Artificial Intelligence. These studies were conducted using ForSTI and TA.

2. If your organization have not conducted ForSTI or TA in the past, what were the reasons for this? Would your organization be interested in undertaking either ForSTI or TA for developing countries in the near future?

As answered in the previous question, ESCWA has conducted ForSTI and TA in the past.

3. Who was your counterpart in the beneficiary countries responsible for implementing the ForSTI and/or TA undertaken - national government, sub-national levels of government (state/province or other levels), industry, universities, research institutes or civil society?

ESCWA's megatrends studies are aimed at the regional, national, and local levels, including legislative, institutional, and administrative levels. They provide these and other stakeholders, key findings, messages, and recommendations to facilitate and expedite the realization of the potential positive benefits of the megatrends and minimize the impact of the negative ones.

4. In which sectors and/or for what policy processes have ForSTI and TA been undertaken, or linked to? What SDGs have they related to?

All studies under the megatrends series are related to emerging technologies that can transform Arab society. All recommendations made in the study clearly identify which SDGs they support.

5. What specific methods (tools) and methodologies have been used for ForSTI and/or TA?

The main tool used in conducting the megatrends series, was strategic foresight, including horizon scanning, implications, wheels, potential futures, etc. Various other methods and methodologies were also used including literature review, interviews with experts, expert group meetings.

6. What challenges has your organization experienced in undertaking ForSTI and TA exercises? Does your beneficiary country have any specific capacity needs to strengthen the conduct and use of ForSTI and TA?

Given the context of the Arab countries, the main challenge was to introduce the practice of strategic foresight, and distinguish it from the better known concept of prediction. In terms of specific needs, for example, ESCWA has received a request from Jordan to assess their metaverse readiness.

7. Has your organization conducted combined ForSTI and TA in a single exercise at any time? What were the benefits and challenges of combining ForSTI and TA? Do you see this as a useful and feasible approach?

ForSTI and TA are two inherent parts of the megatrends series that offer a powerful approach to understanding and navigating the future impacts of emerging technologies. A more

comprehensive, informed, and inclusive decision-making process can significantly outweigh the challenges. However, successfully addressing the challenges requires careful planning, resource allocation, and the development of integrated methodologies to ensure effective and actionable outcomes.

8. What role(s) can international cooperation, and the CSTD, play in promoting ForSTI and TA?

International cooperation can play a crucial role in promoting ForSTI and TA by facilitating the exchange of knowledge, best practices, and resources among countries. Specifically, ESCWA is developing an online strategic foresight course that will be made available to the officials of our member states and to the general public. As interest increases, ESCWA plans to provide tailored support to interested countries in using ForSTI and TA in the context of the megatrends series.

9. Based on your organization's experiences, how have ForSTI and TA improved STI decision making and the prioritization, design and implementation of STI policies?

It is hoped that the integration of ForSTI and TA will lead to more proactive, inclusive, and effective STI decision-making, amongst member states, at least in relation to the megatrends studied, ensuring that policies are better aligned with future needs and societal goals.