PH-US-UNCTAD HARNESSING STI FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION WORKSHOP

Message by

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In a world facing multiple challenges, UNCTAD is happy to partner with member states of the UN Commission on Science and Technology for Development – the CSTD – to help forge international cooperation in science, technology, and innovation (STI) for disaster risk reduction.

At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Government of the Philippines for the initiative to organize this important workshop. The Asia-Pacific region is one of the most disaster-prone areas in the world, and the Philippines, which lies within the Ring of Fire, has extensive experience in deploying science and technology for disaster and climate resilience actions that other countries and regions can look to as best practices.

Allow me to also express my sincere gratitude to the Government of the United States for its support to this workshop – especially to ensure that delegates from developing countries can participate.

I wish to thank all the countries participating in the workshop and their representatives who will be sharing their experiences on the use of STI for disaster risk reduction. My appreciation to Austria, Brazil, Cameroon, the Gambia, Guinea, Japan, Oman, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Tanzania, Türkiye, the United States of America, and Uzbekistan.

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Ladies and gentlemen,

Disaster occurrence and intensity are steadily increasing. They are having detrimental social, economic, and environmental impacts on communities. People living in developing countries are most vulnerable because of their lack of capacities to mitigate, monitor, and respond to various types of disasters.

We know that science, technology, and innovation (STI) can be central to disaster risk reduction and sustainable development overall. This is recognized in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction. However, the ability to access and use science and technology tools effectively varies across countries and communities.

Let me give you two examples of how STI has been used effectively:

First, with the use of satellite technologies, that are widely available, increasingly at low cost, big data models are being developed for early warning for disasters. Digital apps are then used for sharing information and notifying citizens. The Philippines and several countries that are participating in this workshop have considerable experience in this space.

Second, rapidly evolving frontier technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning and big data will continue to improve digital tools for disaster risk reduction. You will hear during the workshop from experts about the use of these frontier technologies to tackle disasters.

Although it is not the main subject of the workshop, it is important to recognize that sound and well-grounded science, technology, and innovation policies play important roles in enabling economic development and achieving SDGs. They help to create the capacity needed for countries to withstand various shocks and recover from them faster, and to build socioeconomic resilience to external shocks.

We know disasters have no borders. They can affect multiple countries simultaneously, as we have seen with recent earthquakes, floods, typhoons, and of course, the COVID-19 pandemic. They can have devastating effects in small and big countries, rich and poor. Only

collective responses will work. This means that international cooperation is critical for disaster risk reduction and response. This is why this workshop; and learning and sharing spaces like this are so important.

I am sorry I cannot be with you in Manila. I hope that you will have productive and fruitful discussions during the next two days; and establish networks that you could reach out to when in need. I look forward to any opportunities for establishing partnerships across CSTD members on using science and technology for disaster risk reduction.

Thank you.