

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD), twenty-third session (virtual meeting)  
Geneva, 10-12 June 2020**

**Opening Ceremony**

Welcoming remarks by

Mr. Kekgonne Edinton Baipoledi  
Deputy Permanent Secretary  
Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology, Botswana  
and Chair of the CSTD

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**Opening remarks by  
Mr. Kekgonne Edinton Baipoledi**

Chair of the twenty-third session of the  
Commission on Science and Technology for Development  
Virtual Informal Meeting  
Wednesday 10 June

*Good morning, good afternoon, good evening,*

*Excellencies,*

*Distinguished delegates,*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

It is a great pleasure for me to welcome you to this virtual informal meeting of the twenty-third annual session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). I am very glad to acknowledge Ministers and other high-level participants and delegates joining us. I would also like to warmly welcome representatives from observer states, and the civil society, technical community, the business sector and from other stakeholder groups who are with us today.

The Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) is the prime forum in the United Nations to discuss how STI can serve as enablers of sustainable development. Although this has always been a fundamental question for the international community, today our discussions are timelier than ever.

The current global health crisis showed us the crucial contribution of science, technology and innovation (STI) in addressing the health care challenges brought about by COVID-19, but also in supporting the society and economy in a time of a major turmoil. Our first ever virtual meeting is a good example.

Today we are holding a discussion on “*Harnessing science, technology, and innovation to accelerate progress on the SDGs and addressing COVID-19.*” Tomorrow we will examine the themes “*Harnessing rapid technological change for inclusive and sustainable development*” and “*Exploring space technologies for sustainable development and the benefits of international research collaboration in this context.*” On Friday, we will review the progress in the implementation of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes.

Based on the inter-sessional work of the CSTD, the key policy messages arising from both priority themes – on space for the SDGs and rapid technological change –, highlight the importance of the international community coming and working together. Additionally, both themes explore how technology can effectively contribute to accelerating action in a cross-cutting manner. I think this message should guide us also in our efforts to fight COVID-19.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

I would like to highlight some concrete initiatives that the CSTD has undertaken since our last session in May 2019.

The CSTD has been aiming to increase collaboration through regional consultations. In this inter-sessional cycle, we had one such consultation in Asia, hosted at ESCAP, while I led a similar discussion for African stakeholders during the Science Forum South Africa.

Furthermore, the CSTD has been facilitating capacity building initiatives between countries, in particular South-South collaboration in the area of STI.

In the past two years, the Commission has collaborated with the Chinese Government on training courses on STI policy. In 2019, the collaboration expanded from two courses to also include a young scientist program.

I am happy to inform you about two additional training tracks: training courses on STI in collaboration with the Brazilian government and a new collaboration with the Okayama University in Japan offering joint research and training courses to young female scientists from developing countries and opportunities for doctoral studies to young scientists.

The work of the CSTD has not stopped with the coronavirus outbreak. Over fifteen CSTD members and several other stakeholders have shared country-level STI responses to COVID-19, as well as policy solutions and other fixes that ensure that STI are deployed for the good of all. These contributions are available at the CSTD web site.

The CSTD Secretariat has been also active in supporting STI policy stakeholders through the UN Interagency Task Team on STI (IATT) as well through the Tech Access Partnership (TAP) that aims to support developing countries to scale up local production of critical health technologies needed to combat COVID-19.

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

Let me finally wish you a successful virtual meeting and assure you that I will spare no efforts to help the Commission to deliver a successful twenty-third session.

Thank you.