

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD), twenty-fourth session  
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**Opening Session**

Address by

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**Opening Remarks**  
**24<sup>th</sup> Commission on Science and Technology for**  
**Development (CSTD)**

**President of the Economic and Social Council**  
**(ECOSOC)**  
(17 May 2021)

**Excellencies,**  
**Ladies and gentlemen,**

I am pleased to address the 24<sup>th</sup> Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD).

2. Today we are meeting at an inflection point in the history. The Pandemic has triggered the worst recession since Second World War inflicted unimaginable human suffering across the world.

3. The impact of the Pandemic has been unequal. The poorest people and the poorest

countries have suffered the most. The richer countries have mobilized the money for economic recovery. The poor are struggling to find the fiscal space and liquidity to finance their recovery.

4. Most of the rich will be vaccinated soon. The poor countries may have to wait for many years to vaccinate their people.

5. Science and innovation has made it possible to develop vaccines in a record period of time enabling us to return to the life of normalcy. Digital technologies enabled countries, communities, and individuals to maintain socio-economic activity despite lockdowns and social distancing.

6. The potential of science and technology must be mobilized to enhance the capacity and resilience of health systems in developing countries. Apart from the policy discussions and financial

outlay required, the power of digitalization can contribute critically in strengthening health systems and promoting the realization of the SDGs.

7. However, the pandemic has also exposed the glaring digital and technological divides between people in various parts of the world. Almost half of the world's population remains offline and unable to take advantage of the productive opportunities that the digital economy offers.

8. Blockchain technology could be a game changer, with the potential to revolutionize processes from finance to pharmaceutical industries, from government public services to humanitarian work and development aid.

9. Developing countries are at a disadvantage not only because they lack necessary skills and

technologies but they also due to the inadequacy of basic infrastructures in ICT and energy.

### **Excellencies,**

10. To mitigate the negative consequences of technology and maximize its benefits for everyone, I propose consideration of the following measures:

- i) Necessary exceptions should be created in TRIPS agreement to ramp up vaccines and medicine production in developing countries. Medical research should be considered as global public good.
  
- ii) Massive investments both from public and private sector are required in sustainable infrastructures, which are essential for bridging the digital and technological divide. The development of infrastructure and S&T

- should be promoted in sync. They can be mutually reinforcing.
- iii) Developing countries strategies should not play “catch-up”, aiming for sunset development models. They should aim to leap frog into the digital and technology era – focusing on broad-band, G-5, AI, quantum computing etc. There are ready examples of success – especially in Asia.
  - iv) The private sector – which controls 70% of the global ICT infrastructure – has an important responsibility in these areas. It is essential to address some of the policies and practices of Big Technology Companies. We should focus on tax policies, transfer pricing, free and fair trade. Also, cyber crimes, cyber security threats, disinformation. National and international regulatory frameworks are

essential for equitable technology governance and development.

- v) Serious consideration should be accorded to creating a platform for sharing digital public goods, engaging talent and pooling data sets in areas related to attaining the SDGs.
  
- vi) We need effective mechanisms of cooperation and governance to prevent fragmentation of the digital landscape. Interoperability of data and standards are vital for global and sustainable development.
  
- vii) Today more broadly, we must utilize the application of the millions of open-source technologies. A comprehensive repository or database of free and open technologies should be created. It could accelerate innovation and

applications across all the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The CSTD should provide guidance on the ways to operationalize a UN-backed database on open source technologies in support of Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development.

### **Excellencies,**

11. As the UN's focal point for the treatment of science and technology's development dimensions, this Commission has a crucial responsibility to support informed decision-making at the United Nations on long-standing challenges such as technology transfer and knowledge diffusion as well as on the impact on development of emerging scientific and technological achievements and breakthroughs – from artificial intelligence to genome editing.



12. Let me end by commending the excellent work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development over many years.

13. I wish you a fruitful discussion today.

**Thank you.**