

**UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
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**The role of science, technology and innovation in a sustainable and resilient
recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic**

Statement submitted by

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**United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for
Development (CSTD)
Twenty-fourth annual session**

**HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE ON
“THE ROLE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND INNOVATION IN A
SUSTAINABLE AND RESILIENT RECOVERY FROM THE COVID-19
PANDEMIC”**

17 May 2021 | 09:00-10:00 PM, Manila time
15:00-16:00 (CEST)

Statement to be delivered by

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Secretary
Department of Science and Technology

On behalf of the

Republic of the Philippines

Mr. Chair, excellencies, distinguished delegates,

Good evening from the Philippines.

Before the pandemic, rapid technological change has already been apparent, especially in high-income and developed countries. When the COVID-19 hit the world, innovation acceleration became even more apparent and essential. While the pandemic brought upon unprecedented challenges and further aggravated existing issues, it also revealed opportunities for the countries to develop new and emerging technologies and repurpose existing ones.

The Philippines, through the Department of Science and Technology (DOST) has demonstrated the potentials of reinventing the available technologies such as developing local COVID-19 rRT-PCR detection kit which technology platform was initially used for dengue; a telemedicine device that measures the vital signs of patients; an epidemiological modeler software to monitor the COVID-19 spread; and 3D printing for face shield frames and various hospital items. The Department also supported new innovations such as designing specimen collection booths, developing local ventilators, and creating a travel management system application.

While rapid technological change brings promising benefits, these advances may also worsen the inequalities within and between countries. UNCTAD's Technology and Innovation Report 2021 states that *“developing countries face three main challenges in promoting equal access to the benefits of frontier technologies which are higher income poverty, digital divide, and shortage of skills”*. The Philippines supports the suggestion of UNCTAD that *“to overcome these challenges, governments and international community need to guide new and emerging technologies so that they support sustainable development.”*¹

Ladies and gentlemen, for the governments to successfully create an enabling environment and ensure that the benefits of the technologies are shared by everyone, all sectors in the society must be engaged. Governments must collaborate with the private sector, the academic and research institutions, the non-government organizations, and the civil society. The Philippines built partnerships between enterprises/businesses and universities or government R&D institutions through the Department's program called Collaborative Research and Development to Leverage the Philippine Economy

¹ United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2021). Technology and Innovation Report 2021. United Nations Publications. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/tir2020_en.pdf

(CRADLE). Businesses are also being capacitated with R&D and innovation capabilities through our Business Innovation Through Science and Technology (BIST) Program. Technological support and technical assistance must be extended to the vulnerable sector and marginalized communities starting at the local or national level. The Philippines deploys S&T interventions to empower communities through livelihood programs and other basic needs. The government also extends its support to MSMEs by providing assistance for technology upgrading. These enterprises are encouraged to upscale their equipment and facilities with Industry 4.0 technologies.

Due to the physical restrictions put in place to protect the people from COVID-19, societies shifted to digitalization. From e-commerce, to communications, to online learning and jobs, and to delivering services, digital transformation became a means to continuously perform the people's daily activities. Recognizing the great digital divide, the Philippines promotes connectivity through the National Broadband Program for upscaling the country's infrastructure and through the Free Wifi for All Program. While we call for universal access to the internet, we must also protect the safety of the users online through transparency, data privacy, and data security.

Excellencies, in this dynamic phase of technological wave, the fear of technologies replacing human functions and jobs has intensified. However, we must not forget that it is our role to ensure that these innovations would cater to the needs of the society and complement human activity.

We thank UNCTAD and the CSTD Secretariat for opening a platform for us to convene through these roundtable sessions, conferences, and interactive discussions. These provide avenues for the countries to establish networks and later on collaborate on capacity building activities, joint research and S&T development programs.

The pandemic calls for strengthened international cooperation. It is high time that we extend a helping hand to one another, may it be through North-South, South-South, triangular, regional, or multilateral cooperation. The nations' efforts to recover would be stronger, more resilient, and more sustainable if they are collective.

Excellencies, we must make science and technology work and overcome the crisis without leaving each other behind.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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