The role of science, technology and innovation in accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels

Statement by

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QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

The following questions are proposed to guide the discussions of the roundtable around the theme of accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels:

- How can STI, particularly digital technologies, be leveraged for this purpose, while also addressing the vulnerabilities, inequalities, and systemic weaknesses that the pandemic has revealed?

- What should be done to promote public engagement and foster innovative partnerships with the private sector in this regard?

- What actions could the CSTD and the international community take to strengthen global STI cooperation aimed at securing faster progress on SDG 6, 7, 9, and 17?

- Should the CSTD include on its future agenda an item about national experience sharing by countries undertaking a voluntary review at the HLPF on the same year that would address the issue of leveraging STI to accelerate progress and move closer to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to increase their resilience against future crises?
Thank you, Madam/Mister Chair.

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Colleagues,

It has been a little over three (3) years since the coronavirus disease outbreak started. COVID-19 brought unprecedented consequences which includes the setback of efforts and progress made in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Although there have been a lot of unknowns and uncertainties about COVID-19, the societies were quick to adopt digital technologies during the pandemic. Unfortunately, vulnerabilities, inequalities, and systemic weaknesses became very evident, if not aggravated. In order to leverage STI and digital technologies to address these local and global challenges, we must first acknowledge the gaps and available resources in our countries.

In the Philippines, we have harnessed STI through the use of existing technologies, including digital technologies, and repurposing them to respond to COVID-19. This includes the digital disease surveillance and modeling platform called “FASSSTER” initially designed for dengue, measles, and typhoid but was also used to monitor the spread of the COVID-19. Another technology of the Department of Science and Technology is the RxBox, a telehealth device that can monitor the vital signs of patients with data that can be sent to medical doctors. These are being deployed in the local government units of the Philippines, especially in Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDA) where Rural Health Units and their people have limited access to basic healthcare services. This became even more important as it was used to monitor COVID-19 patients to lessen exposure of healthcare workers at the height of the pandemic. Lastly, we developed Safe, Swift, and Smart Passage system or “S-PaSS”, a travel management system primarily intended to facilitate the safe travel of Locally Stranded Individuals (LSIs), Returning Overseas Filipinos (ROFs) Emergency Travelers (ETs), and other travelers during the pandemic and in consideration of restrictions.

The development of new and repurposing of existing innovative solutions could contribute in solving pressing issues. To utilize digital technologies, infrastructure and universal internet access should be put in place. Platforms, programs, and activities should be inclusive and targeted to eradicate the root causes of social and economic challenges.
Governments, especially, should develop policies and projects that would help address vulnerabilities and inequalities.

The public and private partners must be involved in the initiatives, from ideation to implementation and evaluation. Assessment of the stakeholders’ needs and the barriers they are facing would be crucial in designing “tailor fit” interventions which, in turn, would also foster innovative partnerships among different sectors in the society. In order to sustain economic development and lessen the impacts of future pandemics to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Philippine government, through the DOST, is establishing the Virology and Vaccine Institute of the Philippines (VIP) which will build the country’s capacity to develop and manufacture its own vaccines.

**Excellencies**, the Philippines supports the Ministerial declaration of the High-Level Segment of the 2022 Session of ECOSOC and 2022 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, particularly in recognizing the primary responsibility of the Governments to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Governments should create enabling environment for different actors in the STI ecosystem to continue to develop technologies and innovations that could be beneficial to the communities.

The Department of Science and Technology, for example, has supported various R&D institutions, academe, NGOs, startups, and micro-, small-, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) through upskilling their workforce, providing funding, and assisting them to invent and acquire technologies from research to operations. We do this through Small Enterprise Technology Upgrading Program or SETUP, Technology Business Incubation (TBI) Program, Startup Grant Fund Program, and Science for Change Program (S4CP), among others. The Department then deploys outputs of R&D programs such as technologies to communities in need, especially those in the Geographically Isolated and Disadvantaged Areas (GIDAs) through our Community Empowerment Thru S&T Program or CEST. Such initiatives may be upscaled on a regional and international level with the help of the CSTD and other international organizations.

The Philippines further reaffirms its commitment to international cooperation and multilateralism, recognizing that to recover from the pandemic and also achieve SDGs 6, 7, 9, and 11, we must collectively determine the common, as much as the individual issues, that the countries are facing, most especially in the developing and least developed countries. Through international platforms such as the CSTD, we can benchmark on the best practices of each other and work together on finding solutions on
the global challenges. Mobilize financial resources, share technical know-how, conduct foresight exercises, implement joint research and development, capacitate human resources, and transfer technologies. These are what we can do hand-in-hand.

The Philippines supports the inclusion on the CSTD’s future agenda an item about national experience sharing by countries undertaking a voluntary review at the HLPF on the same year that would address the issue of leveraging STI to accelerate progress and move closer to the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda and to increase their resilience against future crises.

The Philippines is open for collaborative programs in science, technology, and innovation. We believe that through our joint efforts, we can recover from the pandemic and accelerate the progress in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, while leaving no one behind.

Thank you.