Presentation of the SG Report on Global Cooperation on Science, Technology and Innovation for Development.

15 April 2024, 15:00

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to present the Report of the Secretary-General on Global Cooperation in Science, Technology and Innovation for Development.

The Secretariat has prepared the report based on the input provided by 19 member States of the CSTD and 9 international organizations, as well as the discussions at the Intersessional Panel of the CSTD in Lisbon last November.

The report is based on the notion that global challenges need global solutions, as shown by the threat of pandemics or climate change. Inclusiveness in STI is not merely a matter of equity but also of effectiveness.

The development of significant STI capabilities on a truly global scale is therefore a shared interest of the international community. The growing complexity of emerging technologies, their fast pace of change, and the significant transformation brought about by the recent waves of innovation highlight the need for a collaborative approach to STI.

The report discusses collaboration mechanisms, lessons learned, and good practices related to four key elements for STI development:

- Strategic planning

- STI enablers

- Research and development

- Innovation

For each of them the report provides a review of the status of different areas of global collaboration that member States, the international community and the CSTD should consider in order to promote international cooperation, and to scale-up the impact of science technology and innovation on the Sustainable Development Goals. In the interest of time, I

will summarize the Report's findings about these elements. I will also touch briefly on the need to increase funding for global STI collaboration:

1. Strategic planning

Rapid technological change and the global impact of emerging technologies call for quick responses and a strategic approach to policymaking.

Strategic planning requires policymakers and stakeholders to evaluate the implications for economies and societies of the development and deployment of frontier technologies.

In this regard, technology foresight and technology assessment are complementary instruments. Technology foresight investigates possible longer-term global scenarios while the technology assessments focus on the local implications of specific technologies, complementing each other.

The report suggests that an international system of both technology foresight and technology assessment – integrating national, regional, and international organizations and building on existing efforts, like those undertaken by UNCTAD at the request of the CSTD – could support decision-making and consensus-building for global STI development by:

- providing directionality to technological change
- promoting the alignment of national, regional, and international STI agendas with the SDGs, and
- fostering international collaboration.

2. STI enablers

Digital infrastructure is an important area of global collaboration. Beyond helping bridge digital divides, collaboration is needed to ensure interoperability across systems. Coordination is required to build infrastructure systems that enhance access to affordable electricity, mobile networks and the Internet. The report presents examples in this regard from the work of the ITU and the Broadband Commission.

Human capital is another critical enabler. Nurturing digital and entrepreneurial skills would speed up the introduction of innovations in the market and support the co-creation of solutions for global challenges.

STI capacity building collaboration is essential also inclusiveness in STI development. An example of collaboration in this regard is the partnership

between the University of Okayama and UNCTAD to strengthen the STI capacities of developing countries, especially by offering young female scientists opportunities to engage in cutting-edge research activities. We will have a dedicated discussion on this later this week.

3. Research and development

The research and development capacity gap between developed and developing countries remains wide both in absolute terms and relative to gross domestic product. Strengthening the inclusion of developing countries in international STI networks is key to unfold their STI capacities.

Moreover, international collaborative research can result in more inclusive and richer programmes that reflect the priorities of different partners.

Two cases of best practice in this area are CERN and CGIAR. CERN's partnership-oriented approach with clear common goals and consensual governance helps manage multi-polarity and avoid gridlocks. CGIAR, on the other hand is a reference for co-identification and co-creation of solutions to prioritize challenges for the global South, letting national partners lead research activities.

4. Innovation

The impact of STI is felt when innovations enter in our daily lives. Technology-centred policies are not enough. Transformative change requires addressing the socio-economic and technological context of innovators.

Open access to physical facilities and services, when tailored to existing and potential demand from industry, represents a promising approach to serving start-ups and small and medium-sized technological enterprises to develop new products.

For example, the European Union launched the Open Innovation Test Beds to offer, including to non-European Union firms, facilities and services to develop and test advanced materials, thus lowering costs and technological risk.

Fostering investment in STI

STI collaboration is difficult when partners are separated by huge capability gaps. We need more efforts to close those gaps. Funding STI collaboration is

not just about solidarity, it's about finding global solutions to global problems.

Unfortunately, ODA dedicated to STI-related projects remains rather limited.

The share of STI in total Official Development Assistance was just about 1.2% in 2022. After showing a positive trend in the aftermath of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda with a peak of 1.7% in 2019, the share has been declining in the last years back to the levels of 2012.

This trend is inconsistent with the increasing importance that research, development and innovation have in determining national development performance or the increasing STI investment in advanced economies.

Even relatively small re-allocations from existing ODA budgets could make a significant difference in overall support to the strengthening of STI capacities in developing countries. If channeled toward collaborative projects, this extra funding could support the inclusion of developing countries into international research and innovation networks and strengthen global STI partnerships.

Ladies.and.gentlemen?

Let me conclude by underlining that we should bring stakeholders from different sectors and backgrounds to find solutions collectively. This includes engaging with key private actors and institutions providing knowledge and project finance and resources.

Global partnerships are crucial to support access to STI, enhance knowledge-sharing, and foster the scaling up of good practices.

This will speed up technological uptake and devise solutions for global challenges.

Thank you very much