

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

**High-level Roundtable on
“Harnessing frontier and space technologies for accelerating progress towards the
SDGs”**

**23 March 2020, 12.00-13.00
E-building, Palais des Nations**

Concept Note

During the twenty-third annual session of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), a high-level roundtable will be held on the morning of 23 March 2020, with the theme of “*Harnessing frontier and space technologies for accelerating progress towards the SDGs*”. The Commission will thereby contribute to the High-Level Segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in July 2020, which will explore the theme “*Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development*”.

Science, technology and innovation (STI) have a vital role in empowering people and accelerating paths towards inclusiveness and sustainability. Applications of space science and technologies can contribute to accelerating progress towards the SDGs through health applications, telecommunications, ensuring food security, reducing disaster risks, preventing humanitarian crises, monitoring natural resources and reducing poverty. Similarly, other frontier technologies, such as machine learning, artificial intelligence and advances in information and communication technologies, have the potential to empower people through transforming agriculture, education, energy supply, health or public services in both developed and developing countries. However, the rapid pace of these technological transformations has raised concerns of increasing inequalities between and within countries, especially between those who have and have not access to them.

Against this context, the session will examine how frontier and space technologies can contribute to the decade of action on delivering the sustainable development goals through accelerated action and transformative pathways. The session will also identify ways to incorporate STI as part of national development strategies to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. In particular, it will provide an opportunity for high-level policymakers to exchange experiences, lessons learned and best practices in applying STI in achieving the SDGs in light of the ECOSOC theme.

The following are questions to guide the discussion:

- How can policymakers leverage new scientific, technological and innovative applications (including space and frontier technologies) to empower people and insure inclusiveness and sustainability?
- How can we be more effective in mobilizing STI in national development strategies to accelerate progress towards the SDGs?
- What needs to change to address bottlenecks and to ensure that STI policies strategically/effectively incorporate frontier and space technologies to deliver on

sustainable development? What are the benefits of applying a gender-sensitive lens to STI policy making and how are countries doing it?

- What are the actions that the international community, including the CSTD, can take to leverage STI for to empowering people and in insuring inclusiveness and equality?

Format of the high-level roundtable:

Following a brief introduction by the Chair, high-level participants will make their initial interventions (3-5 minutes), broadly addressing the guiding questions. After this the Chair will initiate an interactive discussion among the participants, including those from the floor.