

- DRAFT Concept note -

The role of innovation and technology for sustainable development

7 June 2016, 1:15 – 2:30 pm
Conference Room 1, UN Headquarters New York

1. Background and Theme

One of the deliverables of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and 2030 Agenda is the recognition of the nexus of science-technology-innovation (STI) for economic growth and sustainable development, and the creation of an STI Forum.

Innovation and diffusion of new technologies are indispensable for economic growth. They lead to increased productivity and to the creation of wealth and economic well-being, including decent and green jobs. Innovation and technology are also instrumental to promoting the structural transformation of economies, at different stages of development. By implication, they are also key to enhanced competitiveness. The Addis Agenda aims to incentivize research and innovation for sustainable development and to promote greater access to technology through domestic policy and international cooperation.

However, the capacities of countries to innovate and apply technology for developmental purposes differ greatly. The potential of a country to benefit from technological developments through innovation is likely to be greater when there is effective access to technology at various levels (i.e. from local to national) and in all sectors. It equally depends on a positive enabling environment that brings together physical capital as well as human capital developments, investment in R&D, policy and regulatory environment, among others.

Countries can improve their innovative capacity by benchmarking their performance and leveraging their strengths and addressing weaknesses in innovation, and by learning from best practices in countries who are emerging as innovation leaders at all income levels. This is essential for creating an enabling environment for inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Tools exist for policy-makers to use to inform the development of their national innovation policies. For example, the Global Innovation Index (GII) published annually by WIPO, Cornell University, INSEAD provides an annual benchmarking of national innovation performance of 141 economies around the world, and helps to identify and analyse global innovation trends and best practices. The key strategic recommendations drawn from UNIDO's Industrial Development Report 2016 on "The Role of Technology and Innovation in Inclusive and Sustainable Industrial Development" also provide key tools for policy-makers.

The UNIDO-WIPO event will address the following questions:

1. What are the key lessons that policy-makers need to take into account to leverage sustainable industrial development?
2. What best practices can be learned from innovation leaders and achievers: leveraging strengths and addressing weaknesses in national innovation performance?
3. How can we incentivize the take-up and adoption of innovative technologies, for sustainable development?

2. Expected Outcome

The event will increase awareness and share key policy tools on the importance of innovation and technology for achieving sustainable development, the opportunities and challenges thereof, and policy recommendations, particularly in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

3. Format and Programme

The event will feature an open panel discussion among panellists representing different stakeholders from the UN, academia and the private sector followed by an interactive dialogue with members of the audience. Participants will include Member States, United Nations organizations, as well as representatives from academia, the private sector and civil society.

Opening 1:15pm – 1:30pm	Opening and scene-setting remarks by co-organizing Member States: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• H.E. Macharia Kamau, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Kenya• H.E. Kai Sauer, Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of Finland - Moderator
Panel discussion 1:30pm – 1:55pm	Presentation by panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mr. Ludo Alcorta, UNIDO Director of Development Policy, Statistics and Research Branch, Vienna• Professor Soumitra Dutta, Dean of the Samuel Curtis Johnson Graduate School of Management, Cornell University, New York• Ms. Katherine Oyama, Senior Policy Counsel, Google Inc., Washington D.C.
Lead discussants 1:55 – 2:15	Comments by lead discussants: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Professor Xiaolan Fu, Founding Director of the Technology and Management Centre for Development (TMCD), Professor of Technology and International Development, University of Oxford, Oxford• Ms. Natalia Agapitova, Coordinator for Social Enterprise Innovations, World Bank, Washington D.C.
Q&A session 2:15pm-2:25pm	Interactive discussion with the audience
Closing 2:25pm – 2:30pm	Wrap-up by Moderator and closing remarks