

Technology Assessment Platform: Ensuring Peoples' Participation in Implementing STI Roadmaps

6 June 2016, Tuesday
6:15-7:30PM, CR 11

Co-Organizers:

UN Non Government Liaison Service (UN NGLS)
Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration (ETC Group)
Technology Assessment Platform in Latin America (TAP-LA)
Civil Society Group on Financing for Development (CSO FfD Group)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN in September 2015 underlines the important role of science, technology and innovation (STI) in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Along with finance, capacity building and partnerships, STI is identified as a crucial means of implementation to achieve the 2030 Agenda with the key elements of how to operationalize outlined in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development. 15 of the 17 SDGs directly refer to STI as a means to achieve particular goals and targets. STI *per se*, however, is not a panacea to the development challenges that the international community needs to address to ensure equitable and just sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda is clear on what kind of STI is needed to achieve the SDGs – that the “development and application of technology are climate-sensitive, respect biodiversity and are resilient” (para. 9); and that STI capacities must “move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production” (para. 28).

The technology cycle generally involves research and development, diffusion, transfer and deployment. **One very critical phase that is often missing, or ignored, in the technology cycle is the assessment/evaluation of the potential impacts of technologies.** It is very important that any STI Roadmap **integrates technology assessment in interventions in the different stages of the technology cycle.** To be meaningful, effective and relevant, technology assessment must involve the direct participation of communities and populations who will be potentially affected by the introduction of new technologies.

The need for technology assessment was already recognized in 1992 in Agenda 21 (Chapter 34). The UN's capacity to assess technologies, however, was downgraded after the Rio Conference, thus at Rio+20 in 2012, Member-States recognized the urgent need to develop the capacity to evaluate the potential adverse consequences of new technologies at the global, regional and national levels (“The Future We Want”, para. 275). The need for capacity has become more urgent in view of the: (1) accelerated pace of scientific and technological development; (2) poor capacity of governments to understand and regulate emerging technologies; (3) convergence in previously discreet fields of scientific inquiry has multiplied the impacts of resulting technologies for sustainable development; and (4) fewer and bigger transnational corporations that control both technologies and resources.

Precaution demands the careful assessment of technologies before, not after, governments and inter-governmental bodies start funding their development and promoting their deployment.

National and international programs of public consultation, with the participation of the people who are directly affected, are critical. People must have the ability to decide which technologies they want, and to reject technologies that are neither environmentally sound nor socially equitable.

The proposed Side Event jointly organized by UN-NGLS, ETC Group, TAP-LA and CSO FfD Group, will expound on the critical importance of participatory technology assessment in ensuring the development, transfer and deployment of environmentally sound technologies to attain the SDGs. The Side Event will directly contribute to enriching the discussions in the STI Forum by providing experiences and views on the critical importance of participatory technology assessment in the development and implementation of STI Roadmaps and in ensuring that environmentally sound, culturally sensitive and economically equitable technologies are promoted to achieve the SDGs.

Programme

Welcome and Background of the Side Event (Susan Alzner, UN-NGLS)

Importance of Technology Assessment in the Technology Cycle (Ms. Silvia Ribeiro, Latin America Director, ETC Group)

Participatory Technology Assessment: Experiences in Latin America (Maria José Guazzelli, Centro Ecológico, Brazil, and TAP-LA)

Importance of Technology Assessment in STI Roadmaps (Ambassador Rolando Castro Córdoba, Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the UN)

Discussions