



Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs

New York, 15-16 May 2017

Concept Note for Session 1 on

“Harnessing Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs – the key to unlocking STI potentials”

Conference Room 4, UN Headquarters New York, 15 May 2017, 10:40 - 11:50 am

1. Background

The first annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (“STI Forum”) in 2016 provided a broad overview of major trends, issues, barriers and potential actions to be taken, in order to fully harness science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also identified technology areas of rapid advances with potentially significant effects on the achievement of the SDGs and societies at large.¹ Technology change is not neutral. It proceeds cumulatively, oftentimes incrementally but at times also in disruptive ways. This year’s STI Forum has a special focus on SDGs 1, 2, 3, 5, 9, and 14, as well as the overarching SDG 17, in line with the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in 2017.

A long-term vision of where the world may want to go in terms of harnessing technology is thus important. In fact, transformational change can arise from visionary plans of scientists, business and governments and the scale-up of technologies. Partnerships between these groups might determine the direction of such transformational change. A good understanding is needed as to which factors lead to a technology change that improves widespread human well-being and sustainable development and which jeopardizes it.

2. Objectives - expected outcomes and key messages

The overall objective of the session is to provide such a longer-term vision on how and to which extent the world could realistically harness science, technology and innovation for the achievement of the SDGs in 2030, and for sustained and ever improved human well-being in coming decades.

The session will discuss, among others, the necessary major efforts on science, technology and innovation in all parts of the world to improve human well-being in a sustainable way; the level of cooperation at all levels needed to make it a reality; major challenges to overcome in order to effectively harness STI in the coming decades; and the STI priorities and needs of countries.

3. Format of the session

The session will follow the format of a panel discussion with business, government and civil society representatives. It will provide a vision on harnessing STI for the SDGs in 2030 and for sustained and ever improved human well-being in coming decades. The moderator will introduce the session and give the floor to the panellists for their remarks (maximum of 7 minutes each). This will be followed by moderated discussion, followed by 3 minutes concluding remarks each by the co-chairs.

4. Questions for discussion

The discussion will be guided by the following questions:

- What is your vision for harnessing science, technology and innovation, in order to achieve sustained and ever improved well-being, as envisioned in the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda? What are the most important challenges and opportunities in this respect?
- What are your top three recommendations for action by the United Nations system, governments, businesses, scientists, civil society, and others?

¹ Table 3-3 in “Perspectives of scientists on technology and the SDGs” in GSDR 2016, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10789Chapter3_GSDR2016.pdf