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

New York, 15-16 May 2017

Concept Note for Session 4 on
National STI plans and policies for achieving the SDGs

Conference Room 4, UN Headquarters New York, 16 May 2017, 11:00 - 12:00 am

1. Background

Science, technology and innovation (STI) policies and improved STI governance are critical for progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, traditional STI policy design principles and processes that are primarily based on the linear model of innovation are of limited usefulness when applied to complex interrelated challenges.

Complexity science and systems approaches can help harnessing STI for a new global vision of scientific endeavours and related science policies, based on interconnections, interfaces, participation, discussion, consultation, cooperation, and coordination of policies and perspectives at national and global levels.

Increased horizontal coordination and integration of sectoral policies (breaking out of policy "silos") can help improving coherence of national STI policies within overall development visions and strategies. Taking into account complexity and uncertainties can help understanding and managing by integrating future, systemic, non-linear thinking into STI decision-making.

The challenge is how to redefine the science policy agenda, and re-think international cooperation in the field of STI policy, in a coherent way in *order to* ensure that "*no one* is *left behind.*"

More integrated approaches, such as whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches, are needed to address the complexity of the problems. The whole-of-government approach cuts across the different levels of government, in order to strengthen the policy coherence between sectors, including through various concrete measures, and shared goals and targets. The whole-of-society approach aims to ensure coordinated cooperation between decision makers and representatives of stakeholder groups, in order to build broad ownership of the SDGs.

2. Objectives

The session will discuss STI policy failures and explore options for more efficient governance approaches, including the responsible research and innovation approach. In particular, the session will focus on key challenges for developing countries in this regard. Furthermore, it will identify new trends and opportunities for STI policy, in support of progress towards the SDGs. It will also call upon for increased inter-agency cooperation, synergies and guidelines for STI policy development, in line with the national strategies to achieve the SDGs

3. Format

The session will be organized in form of a panel discussion on future perspectives and to explore STI features in current national (and sub-national plans), STI roadmaps for the SDGs, technology gaps and needs. The moderator will introduce the theme (3 min) and panellists will address the topic with 7-minute remarks. Thereafter, the floor will be open for a series of 3 min remarks, followed by a moderated discussion and remarks from the other participants.

4. Questions for discussion

The discussion will be guided by the following questions:

- What lessons can be learnt from national STI plans and policies and, in particular, STI roadmaps? What are current gaps and high priority actions? What role can scientific and engineering communities play in this regard?
- What are the best ways to design STI policies and instruments for the SDGs that translate the SDG's universality principle into action, while respecting national STI priorities and existing differences in national situations?[2] Which approaches and tools are available to support national STI plans and policies?[3] How to better align international responses, including from scientific and engineering communities, to the national needs?
- What are your top three recommendations for action by the United Nations system, governments, businesses, scientists, civil society, and others?

[2] taking into account the diversity of national contexts and challenges, such as poverty and inequality, fragile economies, dependence on natural resources and agriculture, epidemics, vulnerability to disasters and to climate change, as well as lack of human, financial and institutional resources.

[3] In particular, how can systems analysis methods enable STI policy makers to better understand the interconnectedness of SDG issues and of the range of policies that will be needed? In which cases is the "responsible research and innovation"-approach useful?