Rapid Technological Change, Artificial Intelligence, Automation and their policy implications on the Sustainable Development Goals and Targets

Side Event
III Science Technology and Innovation Forum
Tuesday, June 5th, 8:30-9:45 hrs
Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations
Two United Nations Plaza, 28th Floor
New York, NY 10017

CONCEPT NOTE

BACKGROUND

Technological progress has increased exponentially in the last decades and will represent the ultimate driver for economic growth and improvements in living standards, bringing a transcendental impact on culture and societies. Technological change can potentially have broader global effects than climate change on our societies, and even vitally contribute to overcoming its worst effects. Therefore, it is urgent to raise awareness of the new technologies increasingly disruptive power in order to foster its positive impacts and to prevent the negative ones today, instead of trying to mitigate them in the future.

New technologies such as Automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be used positively to accelerate solutions to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda, including particular targets, but they also can increase inequality among and within countries, affecting particularly vulnerable groups, fostering a concentration of critical knowledge and wealth, and posing significant ethical questions. Governments have a special responsibility in facing the challenges of AI and new technologies: a debate must be promoted to help each Country and the international community to design better public policies for maximizing technological change benefits and reducing risks.

In this context, it is clear that the full engagement of governments, scientists, technology experts, the private sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders is imperative to start tackling such challenges and fostering the opportunities that AI brings. The Science Technology and Innovation (STI) Forum is the primary space for piloting this efforts, as all relevant actors have the opportunity to get involved in discussions and analysis of the policy implications, identifying practical means and solutions to fostering science, technology and innovation towards the accomplishments of the SDGs.

Mexico took the lead in this topic because it believes that the UN, as the centre of international cooperation, has a special responsibility to promote a global discussion on this issue and to look for answers to the predicaments it poses.

Mexico has convened two Expert Group meetings in Mexico City (in December 2016 and last April 2018) which brought together top specialists –both from Academia and International Organizations- from around the world to think collectively on how these new technologies will impact the SDGs' achievement. Based on the conclusions and recommendations, the Group of Experts believes that the discussion of the impact of rapid technological change on sustainable development should continue to be developed and deepened in the Agenda of the United Nations, through the

Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM), including its STI Forum and the UN General Assembly.

OBJECTIVE AND THEMATIC FOCUS

AI advances might be amongst the biggest challenges in modern History. It is already reconfiguring every day activities and being used in commercial products throughout the world. However, the real impact will be felt on economies, societies and governance.

Some opportunities that AI brings are the ability of machines to learn from human experience, to adjust accordingly to new inputs and to analyse and process large volumes of data, supporting human decision-making, providing more effective services, reducing associated risks and developing innovations for every SDG area, particularly in health, education, trade, ITC's, transport, water management, agriculture, energy and sustainable cities.

The use of AI can result in exacerbated unemployment in different productive sectors, such as manufacturing, construction, and transportation, proof of this is that 58% of Jobs are automated today using AI. In order to address this challenge, or even cyber-security, better policies are needed, aiming to bring access to population for learning new technologies, as well as regulations and agreements for inclusive, just and peaceful societies.

The **primary objective** of this side event is to continue the discussion on Automation and AI in order to be able to understand the positive and disruptive effects that are occurring now and that will come in the future. We have a valuable opportunity at the STI Forum to raise awareness on the impact of AI and to identify, support, develop and disseminate better practices and public policies with Governments and relevant stakeholders, in order to maximize benefits and minimize challenges of technological change.

The benefits of the side event will further contribute to the collection, analysis and dissemination of information by all relevant organizations and agencies of the UN System and therefore add to the STI summary which should feed the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) and be the gateway to anchor our discussions in the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly.

PARTICIPANTS

Permanent Representatives, Deputy Permanent Representatives and Heads of Delegation of the Member States that participate in the STI Forum.

With the distinguished participation of

H. E. Ambassador Miguel Ruiz Cabañas, Vice-Minister for Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights of Mexico

ORGANIZERS

The event is being organized by the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations and the State of Mexico.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

Informal discussion on June 5th between 8:30 and 9:45.