

Side Event at the United Nations Summit to adopt the post-2015 development agenda

“Launching the Technology Facilitation Mechanism for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals”

26th September 2015 3pm – 5pm

Co-organised by the Permanent Missions of Brazil and France to the UN, with support of the Inter-agency Task Team on STI for the SDGs

Summary

The Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) was successfully launched by Ministers from France, Brazil and India as well as the UN Deputy Secretary General, the President of the General Assembly and other key players. There was overwhelming expression of support for the TFM as a critical means of implementation to help achieve the SDGs. It is the first major UN initiative stemming from the July Addis Ababa Conference on Financing for Development. Many recognised the great potential of the TFM to foster stronger international and regional technological cooperation, which would benefit many of the SDGs. It was stressed however that the TFM would need to prioritise the issues to be tackled and that its success would be judged by the tangible results it would produce. Success factors to be considered should include enhanced collaboration, technology facilitated based on the 'needs' of countries, and innovation fostered. In his concluding remarks, the President of the General Assembly emphasised the need for an early operation of the TFM and that the UN Inter-Agency Task Team should move this forward with openness, inclusiveness and conviction. He said that in his capacity as PGA he *“will support the early and effective operationalization of the TFM”* as part of three high-level events he will be holding throughout 2016 to secure speedy implementation of commitments relating to the SDGs. He added that *“the TFM can help us live up to the promise to leave no one behind.”*

H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, expressed that with the launch of the TFM, stakeholders started to turn visions and goals into reality, highlighting the momentum in this area – patterns of technology are shifting, joint projects are bringing together experts from different areas; all with the purpose of achieving sustainable development. He emphasised that technology is a central means of implementation for addressing climate change as well as for advancing towards all of the sustainable development goals, but that the poorest and smallest economies had limited participation in the “knowledge economy”. The DSG announced that the Inter-agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs, one of the elements of the TFM would start its work immediately, and that TFM would play a critical role in addressing some of the gaps hindering the facilitation of access to clean and environmentally sound technologies.

H.E. Mr. Laurent Fabius, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development, France, reiterated that the objective of this initiative is to promote science, technology and innovation in order to achieve the sustainable development goals and that France and Brazil have been working together throughout the negotiations on Financing for Development towards this goal. It is an example of cooperation that goes beyond north-south cooperation. Minister Fabius emphasised that the access to technology for everyone at an affordable price is important for development –e.g. 400 million people do not have access to affordable energy– it is clear that accessibility needs to increase. He highlighted the need to have an annual forum starting in 2016 to build and foster global partnerships that are structured, focus on specific needs, work to decrease prices of technologies and to promote cooperation from private sector and other actors from civil society in order to facilitate transferring of technology. G20 countries could cooperate on research before the G20 Summit in Turkey this November.

H.E. Mauro Vieira, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Brazil, expressed that the TFM is a crucial outcome arising from the Rio+20 Conference, which reflects a longstanding demand from developing countries. In the three years since Rio+20, the structured dialogues conducted within the General Assembly allowed member States to move towards a more constructive approach on technology cooperation. The Technology Facilitation Mechanism turned out to be one of the main outcomes of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and a crucial means of implementation for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Science, technology and innovation are essential elements for successfully implementing the SDGs, with technology facilitation not being equivalent to the simple purchase of technology, but comprising to the establishment of the necessary conditions for countries to develop technologies and foster innovation. The TFM has the potential to be a historic achievement of the UN, as it creates new opportunities for cooperation between developing and developed countries. The recently created UN task team will also play a critical role in the preparation of the multistakeholder forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs and the establishment of the online platform. The success of the TFM will eventually depend on the engagement of civil society, private sector, scientific community and other relevant actors.

H.E. Ms. Sujata Mehta, Secretary for Multilateral and Economic Relations, Ministry of External Affairs, India, congratulated Brazil and France for incubating this initiative. This mechanism was one of the landmark outcomes of the Addis Conference and the UN SD summit with technology being key to developing viable solutions. She emphasised that if the world wanted to succeed in combating climate change and fighting poverty, sharing of technology would be a fundamental necessity. While there are several initiatives on technology, the TFM constitutes the first time the international community has done so at a macro and integrated way at the UN. She expressed her hope that this mechanism will bring together the technology debates on technology dissemination, transfer and solutions, as well as contribute to overcome controversies related to technology transfers and intellectual property rights (IPRs). The importance of IPRs should not prevent discussions. The success of this initiative will depend on Member States identifying solutions and not problems as well as on the support of the Secretariat. She emphasised that a constructive spirit was needed and that India has and would continue to give its support to the mechanism.

Ms. Megan Smith, US Chief Technology Officer, Office of Science and Technology Policy, and former Vice-President of Google, USA, made reference to the Solution Summit held on the sidelines of the UN Summit, where people from all over the world had come together with ideas on how to achieve the SDGs. She stressed that the main online platform for sharing solutions would be the internet and the importance of thinking of people as innovators. To capitalize on this, she called for connecting talent from all around the world through internet platforms, so that work in horizontal networks would contribute to achieving sustainable development.

Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, CEO of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), highlighted that the African continent had defined a common African position when negotiating the SDGs, including on topics such as industrialization and STI. He emphasised the need to foster political will, reform national STI infrastructures, build a strong science culture, develop regulatory frameworks and provide an enabling environment for research and innovation. He highlighted the use of regional networks of centres of excellence in different disciplines and functional regulatory systems in Africa to encourage collaboration on innovation and entrepreneurship. He reiterated that the African Union welcomed the launch of this mechanism and that the mapping of STI would be very important.

Dr. Zakri Abdul Hamid, Member of the UN SG's Scientific Advisory Board, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Science Advisor to the Prime Minister, Malaysia, offered the support of the UN SG's Scientific Advisory Board, indicating that this mechanism would be a great facilitator of technology transfer. He also indicated that each country would need to strengthen their capacity in STI through investment in R&D, since most countries

currently only spend less than 1% of GDP on R&D. Countries must give more emphasis on STEM education. International collaboration is required for the success of the TFM and the scientific community needs to be engaged in the difference countries.

Mrs. Adeline Lescanne, CEO of Nutriset, France, emphasized the importance of nutrition to reach the rest of the goals. She mentioned that if the international community cannot reach the objective of nutrition, it would fail to achieve an environment for sustainable development. Technology must be inclusive and help develop economy with the TFM being multi-sectoral so that it would help foster understanding of how technologies can be used. The legislation surrounding technologies must enable setting up partnerships and help countries to work together to create private-private partnerships. She highlighted that the transfer of technology is important but risky –emphasising that if technology was transferred to other countries, the intellectual property must be protected, and that it would be crucial to work on that, in order to ensure economic development.

H.E. Mogens Lykketoft, President of the UN General Assembly, stressed the importance of having strong participation from private sector and that the role of the states was to provide the enabling environment for that. The international community would have to focus on action from all actors to build on the momentum that was created by the UN Summit and from the TFM launch event. The immediate challenge would be to put into place what is needed for the implementation. The PGA highlighted that STI are the key drivers of economic growth and poverty reduction, and the TFM could be the vehicle to achieve this. He indicated that the private, scientific and technology sectors along with other stakeholders all will have a role to play. He expressed his support to the operationalization of the TFM and iterated that he would organise three high-level events (on SDGs, climate change and innovative financing) throughout the year to keep the SDGs on the forefront of our mind, with the first one will being held on 11-12 April.

During the interactive discussion between the panellists and the audience, key points raised included the following:

- Participants expressed the need to transfer technology through innovation. ITC expressed that they are working on solutions that can ensure that we start at the bottom of the pyramid –e.g. by helping farmers to connect to markets and make value chains more traceable. The International Library Union, highlighted that getting access to ICT at the local and national level is crucial –e.g. there are about 750,000 library personnel in the world and thinking about they could help transfer technology.
- UNESCO highlighted the importance of education, capacity building, enabling environment, and regulatory framework. Collaboration between scientific community and UN partners would also be important for south-south cooperation.
- IMO mentioned that one critical element is the integration of scientific data with economic and social data in order to achieve the SDGs.
- UNECE highlighted the need for innovation performance reviews with member states, and the need for PPPs with adequate standards. One of the major challenges of the TFM was to connect policymakers. ITU highlighted as challenge the lack of accessibility for the poorest sectors of societies. Only a third of the developing world, and 10% of LDCs, have access to the internet. There are two targets we need to pay attention to – infrastructure (access to the internet) and Mol (ICTs amongst other mechanism).
- The role of private sector is essential for partnerships and the creation of a governance system at international level. A representative from CERN highlighted the importance of research for inventing technology.

- UNIDO underscored the need for complementarities. Technology is the interaction between individuals. We must have platforms to ensure human connectivity and interaction, so as to think more in terms of technology cooperation instead of technology transfer.