

ECOSOC Management Segment

Statement by

Mr. Peter Major

Chair of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)

Thursday, 22 July 2021

*Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,*

I am honoured to introduce the work and outcome of the 24th session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), which was held in a hybrid format with interpretation into all official UN languages, from 17th to 21st of May this year. This session attracted accumulatively more than 1,200 participants and consisted of six main segments.

During the high-level segment on “The role of science, technology, and innovation in a sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic,” participants noted with concern the unequal access of countries to the benefits of STI in the context of COVID-19 and the persisting digital divides that can exacerbate inequalities. The international community has a critical role to play to ensure equal access to STI in healthcare and other areas of the SDGs, especially through encouraging knowledge transfer, open science and open source technologies. International cooperation and multilateralism should also be enhanced to ensure coordinated policy responses not only in the context of the fight against the ongoing pandemic but also in the context of coping with similar crises in the future.

In considering the priority theme on “Using science, technology and innovation to close the gap on Sustainable Development Goal 3 on good health and well-being,” participants discussed how STI tools and frontier technologies contribute to healthcare across the world, including in the context of the COVID-19, noting the significant inequalities in countries’ STI capacities and access to knowledge and technologies. At the same time, they agreed that the pandemic exposed weaknesses in the science-policy interface, which contributed to the prolonging of the pandemic.

Participants of the session entitled “Harnessing blockchain for sustainable development: prospects and challenges” acknowledged that the emerging uses of blockchain can be breakthroughs in accelerating progress towards sustainable development goals (SDGs) such as in land titles, remittances, identity systems, climate change and financial inclusion. They also agreed on the urgency to address challenges and constraints including cost per transaction, interoperability, privacy and confidentiality and insufficient regulations and infrastructure.

In reviewing the progress made in implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, participants highlighted the challenges in the current Information Society such as digital divide, cybersecurity, misinformation and disinformation, as well as the central role ICT has played during the COVID-19 pandemic in supporting learning, health care and facilitating remote work and conferences.

During the session entitled “Applying gender lens to STI policies to deliver SDG5,” participants noted the continuing gender gap in STI fields, including the gender divide in STEM education and in access to and use of ICTs and suggested

that governments could put in place legal requirements and strong policies that support and empower women to enter all sectors, especially STEM sectors.

During the presentation of reports on Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy Reviews and the following interactive discussion, participants discussed the outcomes of the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Reviews undertaken in the Dominican Republic, Uganda and Zambia with assistance from UNCTAD. Participants also shared their national experiences of the activities that aim to address the challenges identified by the Reviews. UNCTAD was encouraged to continue assisting developing countries and LDCs in undertaking STI policy reviews.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to inform you that the dates for the twenty-fifth session of the CSTD are now set for 28 March - 1 April 2022 with two priority themes: “Industry 4.0 for inclusive development” and “Science, technology and innovation for sustainable urban development in a post-COVID world.” The CSTD secretariat is identifying new members of the Gender Advisory Board, hoping to bring them on board after the ECOSOC adopts the decision to extend its mandate.

In conclusion, CSTD reaffirms its commitment to promote, under the guidance of the resolutions (of the ECOSOC and General Assembly), science, technology and innovation as key means of implementation to tackle development challenges. It will continue to serve as an intergovernmental forum for a timely discussion on pertinent issues.

Thank you.