

ECOSOC integration segment

Panel 3: Human well-being and capabilities:

Building back more resilient, healthy, equitable, and sustainable societies

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored to present the highlights of the 24th session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) held on 17 to 21 May on the role of science, technology and innovation (STI) in a sustainable recovery from COVID-19, especially on using STI to close the gap on SDG3, good health and well-being.

In these challenging times, a whole range of COVID-19-related interventions clearly illustrated the importance of STI -- from genome mapping, diagnostics, contact tracing applications and disease monitoring to treatment and vaccine. Vaccine development typically used to take a decade or longer. However, using breakthrough technologies, researchers and pharmaceutical companies developed COVID-19 vaccines at a remarkable speed in less than a year. With the accelerating rollout of vaccination programmes across the countries, chances are increasing for our economic and social life to gradually return to normal.

Meanwhile, during the pandemic, information and communication technologies (ICTs) have played a crucial role in enabling continuity in education. In so doing, they have accelerated digitalization and the transition to an information society. Increased demand has put greater pressure on communications infrastructure. Remarkably, networks have proven more resilient than expected, and the Internet has successfully managed huge surges in traffic due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic showed the immense potential and promise of digital technologies not only in healthcare and education. They enabled countries, communities, and

individuals to maintain socio-economic activity despite lockdowns and social distancing.

For healthcare beyond the pandemic, it is predicted that the digitalization of healthcare, which was accelerated during this pandemic, will completely change this sector in the next ten years. Telemedicine, remote care and mobile health, including the home monitoring of vital signs and medication adjustments, have reduced costs and improved safety in health care delivery. The application of big data and artificial intelligence are enabling complex clinical decision-making and the identification and reporting of health emergencies. Finally, developing medical and assistive devices and services, such as 3-D printing, have revolutionized the manufacture of devices and equipment.

However, healthcare innovation ecosystems that are essential in adapting these technologies to local conditions face enormous challenges in developing countries. Innovation systems lack enabling policies, funding, skills, physical infrastructure, ICTs, and more. Internet access is a key infrastructure for digital health, but it also requires reliable electricity access. Regulatory frameworks that enable the use of digital health and establishing appropriate laws on data protection and privacy are also necessary. A whole of government and multi-sectoral approach is needed to ensure that STI policies are consistent with national health priorities and sustainable development strategies.

We need to address inequalities in the access to technologies, because they impact health and well-being and almost all other SDGs. As witnessed during this pandemic, when the international community comes together, solutions can be found for global health challenges in record time. We need to use this moment in time to

bring attention to other critical diseases and develop affordable vaccines, treatments and innovative delivery methods.

International collaborative arrangements should seek to foster equitable relations between the collaborating parties through partnerships towards a common goal, including joint ownership of intellectual property rights, enabling open access for scientific collaboration during global health challenges. Other areas of cooperation include privacy and data protection, cyber security, and ethical frameworks for frontier technologies such as AI, and gene editing.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, the 24th CSTD recommended more equitable access to scientific knowledge and technologies (including digital technologies) to close the gap on SDG 3, good health and well-being. Strengthening national innovation systems, promoting international cooperation and a commitment to global solidarity are critical enablers for ensuring that health care technologies are accessible for all. Thank you.