



Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN and President of UN ECOSOC speaking at the Virtual opening session of the Multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology, and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals

4 May 2021

New York

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you all to the 6th Annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals and I call to order its first virtual informal meeting.

We are meeting after a hiatus of the year which has been imposed by the COVID pandemic. Today, probably more than ever, the vital contributions of science, technology, and innovation for the world, and for its people, and for the planet is incontrovertible.

It is science, technology, and innovation which has enabled, much of the world, to continue to function during the lockdown. It is also thanks to science, technology, and innovation that the genetic code of the coronavirus and the necessary protective measures were rapidly identified, and vaccines developed in record time. Yet, we also see vividly that science and technology alone cannot be a full answer.

The pandemic has revealed enormous inequality between developed and developing countries, between the poor and the rich, especially in the utilization and diffusion of modern technology. This gap and inequality is further widening the development divide between the poor and the rich country.



The scarcity of finance and the lack of access to modern technologies have placed the developing countries at a significantly disadvantaged position and will thwart the progress towards the achievement of the SDGs.

The biggest question today is how can we fully utilize the potential of science, technology, and innovation for a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive COVID-19 recovery? How can we deploy science and technology to generate inclusive action by all countries towards the SDGs and beyond? And above all, how can we utilize, science, technology, and innovation to bridge the pervasive inequalities we witness in the world today?

Distinguished participants.

First and foremost, we need to revisit the intellectual property regime. Intellectual property rights can be enablers, as well as impediments in the achievement of the SDGs. I believe that the technologies that are essential for the developing countries to achieve the SDGs should be made available to them through cooperative arrangements.

In this regard, I trust, that the Forum will recommend how we could better leverage initiatives, such as open science, open-source technologies and digital goods for the good of all humanity, including through the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, an online platform that connects multiple databases.

Second, the recent development of vaccines, has established that when a well-defined objective is presented to the scientific community, science can achieve rapid breakthroughs. Therefore, we need to identify objectives for the scientific community to pursue targeted research, such as inherent medicines, education, agriculture, and other areas which could help developing countries to accelerate progress towards the SDG.



Third, the pandemic has also established the critical role, and potential of the digital technologies. A central issue in this regard is bridging the digital divide. Today, 87% of people in advanced countries are online, whereas only 19% are connected in the poorest countries.

The Secretary General has proposed to roadmap to bridge the digital divide. We need to elaborate the specific actions to implement this roadmap. Bridging the digital divide, will require investment in both hardware and software. It will, above all, require political determination in a political way.

Distinguish participants and Excellencies,

The Science and Technology forum is an instrument of the Technological Facilitation Mechanism created through the 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

It is my hope that this year's Science and Technology Forum will generate discussion and suggest actions to address the vital issues that have been identified. I'm happy to see that once again, the STI forum is bringing together diverse experts, policymakers, civil society, academia, and businesses.

The Forum is mandated to facilitate interaction, matchmaking, and the establishment of networks and partnerships. I'm particularly pleased at the emphasis this year on the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the identification of top priorities for R&D and STI solutions to recover better and accelerate the progress towards the SDGs.

They will also be discussions on STI for SDG roadmaps and capacity building, focused on the SDGs to be the view at this year's High Level Political Forum. I'm also pleased with the diversity of side events, the creative solutions from individual innovators, and the partnerships that have been formed with other such events and networks. I am confident that all of these taken together, will propel concerted action towards the common development goals we all share.



ECOSOC | Economic
and Social
Council

75

Once again, I welcome you all to this forum, and look forward to fruitful deliberations and useful and vital results from the STI Forum.

I thank you.