

[Informal background information for the  
UN IATT meeting on 13 October 2020 \(09:30-11:00 NY time\)](#)

The purpose of this informal note is to bring together in one place the most salient background information for the IATT meeting. Feedback, updates, and additions are very much welcome.

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**Agenda for the IATT meeting**

1. IATT members’ updates on their STI-related work in 2020 and plans for 2021
2. Preparations for the STI Forum 2021 and CSTD 2021
3. TFM online platform “2030 Connect”
4. Updates from other IATT workstreams and their future plans until the STI Forum 2021
5. Other matters

### **Extension of the term of the 10-Member Group**

In view of the postponement of the STI Forum 2020 to 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the UN Secretary General decided to extend the term of the current 10-Member-Group (10MG) until the conclusion of the STI Forum on 5 May 2021, in order to enable the Group to conclude carrying out its mandate. Around November 2020, a new call for nominations for the next 10MG will be issued. Unless advised otherwise by nominating entities, nominations received earlier will continue to be valid.

### **Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (4-5 May 2021)**

As in past years, the STI Forum 2021 will be prepared by the UN Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) and the UN Secretary-General's 10MG, in close coordination with the Forum's Co-Chairs to be appointed by the President of ECOSOC – HE Mr Munir Akram (Pakistan).

Formal sessions of the Forum will connect to the HLPF by examining potentials for accelerating progress towards in-focus SDGs under review in the HLPF 2021<sup>1</sup> as well as COVID-19 recovery through STI;; while also addressing cross-cutting issues that are part of the IATT's work programme such as capacity building, gender aspects, emerging technologies, STI for SDG Roadmaps and others.

New elements introduced in recent years will be strengthened, while others will be added. The winners of a global call for innovations will be invited to exhibit their work at the forum, and discussions will be resumed with tech start-up convention organizers to convene an event at the margins of the STI Forum. Convening the Forum back-to-back with the Partnership Forum will allow for stronger synergies with the private sector. The Forum could also build upon the experience gained this year with virtual platforms to consider a broader engagement across the world, for example through policy hackathons; substantive mini-Forums in different parts of the world ('round-the-clock'); and dialogues between technology scenario developers and policy makers. Several of these elements are expected to be connected to further development of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism on-line platform, launched on the margins of the HLPF in 2020. The IATT will also explore the preparation of a report on STI for the SDGs, to support the deliberations at the Forum.

### **United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (17-21 May 2021)**

The 24<sup>th</sup> annual session of the Commission (an ECOSOC body) will be held on 17-19 May 2021 in Geneva. Member States decided that it will consider two priority themes: "Using science, technology and innovation to close the gap on Sustainable Development Goal 3 on good health and well-being" and "Harnessing blockchain for sustainable development: prospects and challenges". As usual the Secretary-General's reports on these themes are being prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat who is inviting inputs from other UN agencies and member States. Also as usual the CSTD will carry out a system-wide review of progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society. The

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<sup>1</sup> These include SDG1 (poverty), 2 (hunger), 3 (health), 8 (employment), 10 (inequality), 12 (sustainable consumption and production), 13 (climate change), 16 (institutions and peace building) and 17 (partnerships).

CSTD annual session also features interactive events with leading scientists and innovators, including Nobel laureates. The CSTD will negotiate two draft resolutions on STI for development and on WSIS follow up for consideration and adoption by ECOSOC.

Prior to the annual session early drafts of the Reports will be discussed at an intersessional meeting that will be held in a hybrid virtual-in person meeting provisionally scheduled for 19-22 January 2021. We invite participation by UN agencies as well as the 10-member Group.

### **High-level political forum on sustainable development (6-15 July 2021)**

The HLPF is the overarching UN platform for the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It has become one of the best attended UN platforms on sustainable development (over 100 ministers from different sectors have participated in recent years). The theme for the 2021 HLPF will be *“Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”*. The HLPF will also review Sustainable Development Goals 1 (poverty), 2 (hunger), 3 (health), 8 (growth and employment), 10 (inequality), 12 (sustainable consumption/production), 13 (climate), 16 (institutions and peace building) and 17 (partnerships)<sup>2</sup> and their interlinkages.

The programme of the HLPF 2021 will be organized around the thematic review and the voluntary national reviews (VNRs) in which governments present their national progress towards sustainable development. It should help to narrow down the broad theme of the HLPF and address policies for building back better after COVID-19 and accelerating progress to realize the SDGs during the decade of action and strengthening resilience. The HLPF is also mandated to address the special needs of countries in special situation, the principle to leave no one behind, and means of implementation including financing and science and technology. Issues related to infrastructure can be woven into the programme.

### **TFM on-line platform**

Regarding the online platform, IATT and 10-Member-Group have worked together to operationalize it, <https://tfm2030connect.un.org/>. In 2018, the IATT focused on advancing the capabilities and design of a prototype of the online platform<sup>3</sup> and also expanded the network of partners and potential users. It also worked on outreach and advocacy, creating a “brand” for the online platform—now known as “2030 Connect”—and developed a plan to secure the necessary funding. In July 2020 during the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, DESA held a virtual launch of “2030 Connect,” the online platform for science, technology and innovation for the SDGs mandated by Member States as part of the TFM. The event, co-hosted with OICT and UNCTAD, featured a demonstration of the platform as well as remarks by several Member State champions and partner organizations including UNESCO and WIPO among others. All speakers and participants applauded the launch of the platform and expressed their

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<sup>2</sup> [A/RES/74/298](#)

<sup>3</sup> For the prototype site and other related work, see: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/tfm#online>

commitment to continued collaboration and their support for the TFM and 2030 Connect. The approximately 300 registered participants engaged actively in the virtual dialogue, and the event was promoted through Twitter and other communications channels. As a follow-up, DESA is preparing a fund-raising document and connecting with more technology databases within and outside the UN.

### **Other IATT work streams**

While the primary mandate of the 10MG is the STI Forum and the online platform, the 10MG has also increasingly been fully involved in the UN interagency work in the various IATT work streams. In fact, since its full operationalization of the TFM, much of the IATT work takes now place in the IATT work streams which continue to evolve. The IATT is looking for ways to promote more collaboration across groups and stakeholders beyond the UN system. Updates for selected workstreams are presented below; in general the workstreams are not to be seen as separate silos, but rather as focus areas with collaboration opportunities for IATT members both within and across them. All workstreams would also welcome engagement with more IATT members – in case of interest, please contact the focal persons against each.

#### ***STI policy frameworks, action plans and roadmaps***

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This workstream - led by DESA, WB, UNESCO, UNCTAD, and UNIDO - has undertaken substantial analytical and operational work on STI roadmaps and action plans for the SDGs, in cooperation with the Government of Japan and the EU's Joint Research Centre.

It developed a joint guidebook and operational note<sup>4</sup>, background papers and an in-depth progress report, and held several expert consultations (New York, Tokyo, Brussels, Nairobi, Guilin and Vienna) to prepare the guidebook and the support to a selected set of countries to develop national STI roadmaps for the SDGs. Also, the G20 outcome package (Osaka Leader's Declaration, 2019) contains guiding principles for the STI for SDGs roadmaps.

Since the High-Level Political Forum in July 2019, five pilot countries, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya and Serbia, together with two international partners, Japan and the European Union, have been participating in the first phase of the Programme. In 2020, despite the context of the global pandemic, the pilot programme has advanced its implementation and pilot countries presented results and shared their experiences through a number of on-line meetings, organized by the IATT (including a side event as part of the HLPF 2020).

All five pilot countries have taken the first step of STI for SDGs Roadmapping exercise, objective setting of pilot projects; they have done so within the context of their national development plans and their economic and social conditions. All of them have chosen a narrow set of SDGs because of the difficulty of tackling all the SDGs simultaneously. As most countries are low income or lower middle-income countries

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<sup>4</sup> For more details and the final version of the guidebook, see: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/tfm#roadmaps>

with high poverty rates and the largest share of employment in agriculture, it is not surprising that SDGs 1, 2, and 4 are the most chosen goals.

As the second step, assessment of the current situation of both SDG gaps and STI supply/capability, requires a lot of data and expertise, the depth of the assessment has varied across the pilot countries. In the third step of developing a vision, goals and targets, what seems to matter is institutional set-ups through which they have engaged in the pilot exercise, especially in involving the highest level of government in the process.

The fourth step of assessing alternative pathways is perhaps the most complex and expensive one, requiring the engagement of representatives from different groups in the innovation chain, including not just the technology, but the agents involved in the value chain to diffusion and use as well as the provision of complementary inputs including finance and infrastructure. None of the pilot countries have yet fully developed detailed roadmaps or have reached the execution or implementation phase.

But during these steps, monitoring and evaluation is a critical element as it will enable countries to learn from the implementation experience and to make adjustments as well as to take into account the impact of changes in the context, i.e. the current COVID-19 crisis. The use of data and expertise has varied widely across pilot countries, depending in large part on what information is readily available as well as how much effort they have put into developing and collecting relevant data. There has also been a lot of variation in the extent to which domestic and international expertise has been tapped to help develop the roadmap, as well as the nature and depth of stakeholder consultations.

Among the five pilot countries, Serbia and Ghana have made considerable progress. In the case of Serbia, there is a commitment for the finalization of the roadmap by the end of 2020, and a plan of follow-up actions that will be implemented by the same team since they have built the necessary experience. Ghana has submitted the situational analysis report for comments prepared by a local consultancy team, led by STEPRI, the Science and Technology Policy Research Institute in Ghana. The new timeline is that the first draft of the roadmap will be ready by the end the year.

There is now a need to expand the work and involve more countries in developing STI roadmaps for the SDGs within their overall action plan to implement the SDGs. In response to the growing demand, DESA is preparing a proposal on Partnership in Action on STI for SDGs Roadmaps, to formalize and broaden the partnerships, and secure the commitments and resources for the pilot projects and beyond. The key issues to be discussed in the near term include:

- the role of STI for SDGs Roadmaps in the achievement of Agenda 2030 and sustainable post-COVID recovery and a common framework for the deep dives;
- concrete results from pilot countries and the major milestones of the work on STI Roadmaps so far and what are the planned next steps;
- international partnerships, a common approach and guidance, networks and online platform to promote and implement STI for SDGs Roadmaps.



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This Work Stream is currently composed of diverse entities, including among others UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNESCO, UNU MERIT, WIPO, UNDESA, UNEP, WB, ITU, UNESCWA, UNECA, UNECLAC, UNECE, and UNESCAP. The WS is responsible on STI for SDGs capacity building, designing and delivering training courses and workshops on STI Policy for SDGs addressed to policy makers and key STI managers from developing countries. The work of the WS was coordinated by UNU-MERIT in the past two years until July 2020 and now is coordinated by UNESCO and UNCTAD.

To-date, the WS delivered two regional trainings, organized in collaboration with the UN regional economic and social commissions, for Arab States (Jordan, April 2018) and for Central and South American countries (Panama, May 2019). Preparation for new regional and national training courses have been undertaken, in partnerships with regional partners, such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE). However, due to the global pandemic, the training activities had to be postponed and the travel and sanitary conditions in most countries still don't allow reprogramming of these trainings.

Currently, the WS is preparing a series of three on-line training sessions for STI officials to present, discuss and analyze the conceptual and methodological approaches on STI policy, as well as the actions and means of implementation put in place by governments around the world in addressing and responding to today's crisis. Three sessions of two hours each are proposed and structured along three core elements: STI policy making for SDGs; Policy instruments; and Innovation and Entrepreneurship. The on-line trainings are tentatively planned for 19 and 26 November 2020 and 3 December 2020. A group of 20 to 30 STI officials, mainly from ministries in charge of STI in countries involved in IATT STI policy projects and activities, will be invited to participate in the interactive discussions bringing examples of concrete actions and practices from their countries' experiences. Priority to be given to African countries and Least Developed Countries (in partnership with the TBLDC).

The WS also plans to prepare a blended (online and in-person) delivery strategy to be implemented starting in 2021.

The WS is also exploring cooperation with GIZ in developing training in Morocco and Tunisia in 2021 and is discussing collaboration with the Tech Bank for LDCs.

### ***Analytical work on emerging science and technologies and the SDGs***

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This Work Stream is currently being led by DESA, UNCTAD and UNIDO colleagues. It has collected, synthesized inputs from within the UN system and from many external experts on new and emerging science and technology issues and their impacts on the SDGs. The group also substantively supported the multi-stakeholder discussions in the STI Forum on the impacts on societies caused by the disruptive effects of new technologies, such as nanotechnology, automation, robotics, artificial intelligence, gene editing, big data, and 3D printing since 2016. In particular, it has prepared the mandated TFM findings on the



impacts of rapid technological change on the SDGs, in line with General Assembly resolutions A/RES/72/242, A/RES/73/17, and A/RES/74/229.

In the past, several expert group meetings and dedicated sessions were organized in Mexico City (2016<sup>5</sup> and 2018<sup>6</sup>), Paris (2017), Incheon (2017), and Vienna (2020)<sup>7</sup>, all of which discussed the economic, societal and environmental impacts and ethical dimensions of new and emerging technologies. These meetings have mobilized many scientists and experts who provided invaluable inputs. WS10 is the dedicated TFM vehicle for these expert processes. WS10 has conducted surveys, and scientists and engineers have contributed many policy briefs and more recently also research papers – all of which highlight key issues for policy attention, targeted joint research and action.

In summary, until March 2020, the WS has primarily: (a) collected inputs from scientists and engineers active in the TFM and beyond (“agenda setting”), (b) provided analytical/research services on new science and technology for the SDGs (“meta-research”), and (c) presented “TFM findings on the impacts of rapid technology change on the SDGs” to the annual Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the SDGs (“synthesizing”).

Since March 2020, much of the work of the group’s members has focused on science and policy issues related to the COVID19 pandemic, in line with the Secretary-General’s COVID-19 response. In May 2020, an online expert group meeting was organized on “Lessons-Learnt from the COVID-19 Pandemic for Better Cooperation on Science and Technology Advice”. Starting from DESA policy brief 62 entitled “The COVID-19 pandemic: a wake-up call for better cooperation at the science-policy-society interface”, meta-research has continued on a more in-depth report on how to improve this interface. A side event was organized at the HLPF on “COVID-19 vaccines: scientific advances, access models and vaccination acceptance”, featuring experts from WHO, GAVI, CEPI, Wilton Park and the USCIB foundation among others. Through IATT a call was launched for COVID-19 technology solutions and the results presented on TFM online platform.

In support of the thematic review of STI in the HLPF 2020 and as requested by the ECOSOC President in view of the postponed STI Forum 2020, the group also collected and synthesized the inputs from the UN system and a range of TFM partners. Some of the group’s members also contributed to the Secretary General’s report on “Long-term future scenarios and the impact of current trends on the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals” for the ECOSOC high-level segment in July 2020.<sup>8</sup> Others have embarked on the preparation of a guidebook.

Most recently, the group has started preparing a strategic roadmap for its future work, in view of the rapid changes in the UN institutional landscape on science and technology. WS, being derived from the mandate to promote multi-stakeholder collaborations on STI for the SDGs aspires to become a knowledge-to-policy broker through bringing together findings and policy lessons in an accessible form.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&type=13&nr=2042&menu=1634>

<sup>6</sup> [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19330EGM\\_MexicoConclusions\\_and\\_Recommendations.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19330EGM_MexicoConclusions_and_Recommendations.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?page=view&nr=3268&type=13&menu=1634>

<sup>8</sup> <https://undocs.org/e/2020/60>



In the coming months, the WS will continue this work. Most importantly, it will prepare a background report on new and emerging STI for the SDGs, in support of the deliberations in the STI Forum in May 2021. As input to the report, the group will compile and synthesize relevant key findings and policy recommendations from publications and expert group meetings from across the UN system and also from selected partners. In this context, it also plans to convene a meeting of UN experts responsible for processes to identify emerging STI issues and will similarly compile and synthesize the latest science and technology issues identified by these processes.

As in previous years, this material will also be used in 2021 to prepare the presentation/statement of the updated TFM findings on the impacts of rapid technological change on the SDGs – this time round possibly with a focus on environmental aspects, as this is an area that has received relatively less attention in the past.

### ***Gender and STI***

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Covid-19 has shone a bright light on existing gender inequalities and much has been written and said about how the health and socio-economic crises are negatively impacting women and girls and setting the world back in the effort to achieve the SDGs. One of the areas that is simultaneously important to achieving the SDGs and where substantial gender gaps persist is in science, technology and innovation (STI).

Gender equality is central to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals. SDG 5 on gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls is cross-cutting in nature. Progress in its attainment will accelerate the pace for all the SDGs.

Twenty-five years after the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, Gender Equality remains a global and cross-sectoral challenge. In the field of STI, underpinning most of the SDGs, women remain under-represented. Without the equal participation of women and girls in STI, humanity loses half of its innovative potential in finding solutions to the world most pressing challenges. It is from this perspective, that the work of the UN Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) Gender and STI Group finds context. In the wake of Covid-19, leapfrogging will be needed in science and technology to get on track for the Decade of Action. Thus, the work of the Group is more important than ever.

In 2019-2020, the Group continued advocacy for the equal participation of women in STI, by monitoring and tracking trends, supporting initiatives that have the potential of triggering the changes needed, raising awareness and promoting a better understanding of what it takes to shape environments that encourage and retain women in STI, and to make STI careers and studies more attractive for girls and women.

More specifically, in 2020 the Group contributed to the IATT Workshop on STI for SDGs, held in February in preparation for the 2020 STI Forum, and participated in a Panel discussion aimed to support a dedicated session on Gender and STI to be included in the Forum's Program to discuss recent developments,





challenges and innovative approaches to achieve progress on the gender equality in STI track. Unfortunately, due to the ongoing Covid-19 crisis, the Forum did not take place.

However, in the same vein, members of the Group co-sponsored and participated in the celebration of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science, held on February 11 and 12, at UNHQ, and contributed to a number of Panels and sessions promoting STI studies and careers to women and girls. In addition, in support of the International Day, some members of the group held a side event – a data science and tech storytelling event for 50 7th and 8th grade girls in New York City on tackling the issue of food waste in schools.

The Group also planned an event entitled “Gender Equality in STI: Driving a Sustainable Future” on the first day of the 64th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). The event was to bring together a broad range of stakeholders from academia, businesses, government and international organizations to look at the global trends and efforts to address the gender gap and discuss barriers that hold women from participation in STI fields. The event aimed at promoting a better understanding of the issues at stake, including educational content, culture, and enabling workplace environments for women and girls in STI. Due to the COVID-19 crisis the format of the CSW64 was altered leading to the cancellation of all side events. The gender and STI side event is now rescheduled to take place virtually on 7 October 2020 at 10 am EST and mark International Day of the Girl.

Another International Day important for gender and STI is International Girls in ICT Day, celebrated on the fourth Thursday in April. Many virtual events took place. The President of the General Assembly, the UN Secretary-General and a number of UN Missions promoted the issue of gender and ICT that day through statements and/or on social media. In addition, several IATT member organizations promoted the day on social media. Between Girls in ICT day 2020 and Girls in ICT day 2021, a number of Group members are being tapped to identify a woman in tech from their organization for the Talking Tech: Girls and Women in ICT virtual interview series that seeks to inspire girls and young women to take up or continue studies in STI and seek out such careers. More than 20 such intergenerational interviews have already been recorded, including a number featuring role model women in tech from the UN System.

The Group also published a second edition of its Brochure on Gender and STI initiatives – showcasing recent initiatives on Gender and STI by some 14 contributing UN entities members of the IATT. In 2020, UNIDO and WMO joined the Group. The 2020 brochure aims at increasing the visibility of the engagement of the UN system on this important agenda and to build complementarity and synergies in action. The Brochure is available here<sup>9</sup> and will be made available at the next STI Forum.

Finally, some Group Members are bringing their expertise and experience to UN Women’s Technology and Innovation Action Coalition for Generation Equality. More information on the work of the Group is available here<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/26212BROCHURE.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/womeninscience>

### Online form for regular updates by IATT members

Please also refer to the brief [online survey](#) for regular updates by IATT members on our most important events, publications, and capacity building efforts on STI for the SDGs. The online form is also available on our new TFM landing page: <https://sdgs.un.org/tfm>

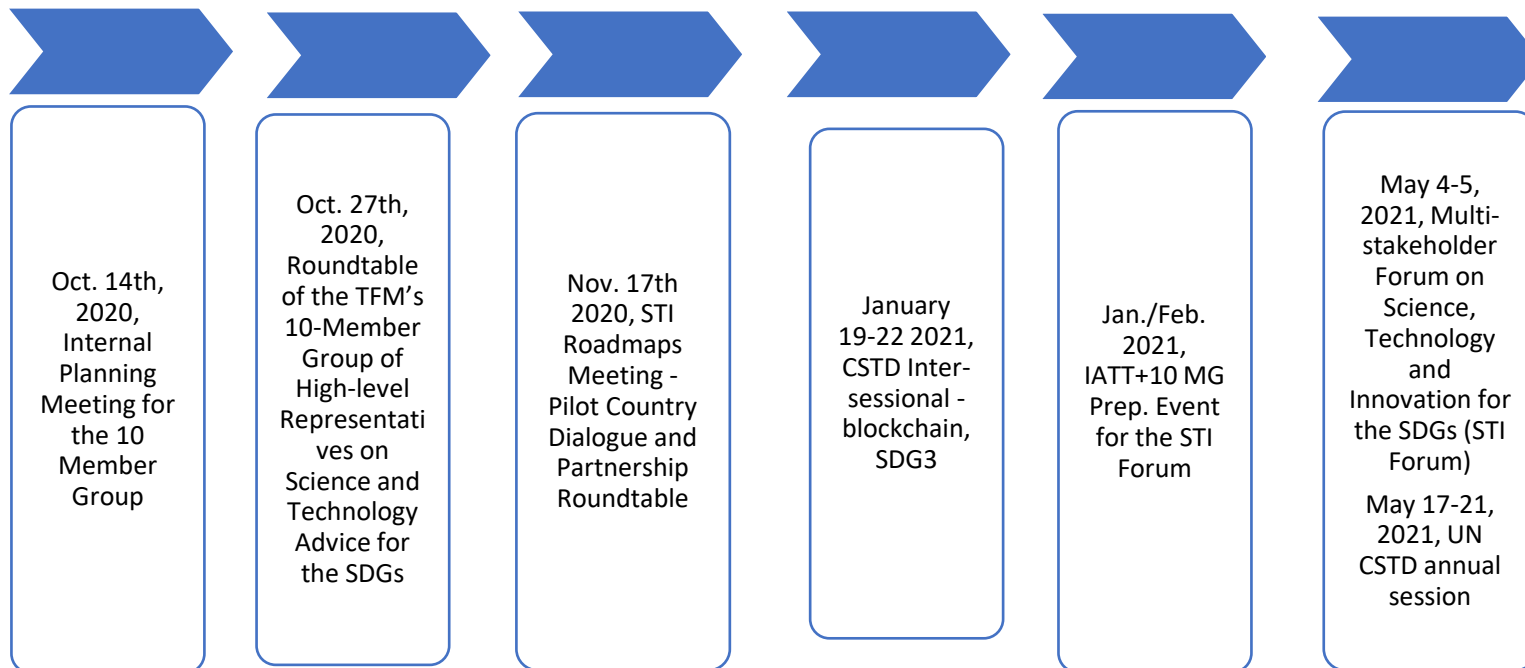
### Recommendations from the TFM lessons-learnt paper

The informal IATT paper took stock and drew lessons from the start-up phase of the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) from 2015 to 2019, also against the background of recent socio-technical and socio-economic changes, in order to support decision-making on the way forward. It aims to stimulate the internal discussions among IATT and TFM partners and to shape a collective vision of the future of the TFM. The paper was prepared by senior UN staff with expert knowledge of the topic and of the history of the TFM and its political debate since 2011. Inputs were solicited from current and former 10-Member Group, interested IATT members, and selected TFM partners, and the paper was finalized in early 2020. The paper proposed seventeen recommendations for consideration in five areas: (a) strategic and programmatic approach; (b) institutional architecture; (c) funding and resources; (d) participation; and (e) substantive areas for works, including at the national level (see Table). One key question is the extent to which the recommendations need to be revisited in light of our recent experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic.

<i>Recommendations for consideration</i>	
<b>Strategic and programmatic approach</b>	Recommendation 1: Develop TFM vision and document guiding principles
	Recommendation 2: Quantifiable TFM targets and key performance indicators
<b>Institutional architecture</b>	Recommendation 3: Improve the fragmented institutional system
	Recommendation 4: Refine the role and working methods of the 10-Member Group
	Recommendation 5: Refine the role and working methods of the Secretariat and IATT
	Recommendation 6: Institute systematic, dedicated and resourced work streams
	Recommendation 7: Make the format of the STI Forum more innovative
<b>Funding and resources</b>	Recommendation 8: Mobilize funding that is commensurate with the objectives
<b>Participation</b>	Recommendation 9: Improve level and balance of multi-stakeholder participation
	Recommendation 10: Full engagement of youth
	Recommendation 11: Timely TFM engagement with innovators and technology pioneers
<b>Substantive areas of work</b>	Recommendation 12: Monitor and analyse the impacts of new and emerging technologies and rapid technology change on the SDGs
	Recommendation 13: Carry out a significant number of pilot applications of STI roadmaps for the SDGs
	Recommendation 14: Synthesize findings from technology scenarios and futures
	Recommendation 15: Substantive areas for future TFM work streams for consideration
<b>at national level:</b>	Recommendation 16: Provide knowledge and capacity building support for the establishment of independent and permanent national mission-innovation councils
	Recommendation 17: Provide knowledge and capacity building support for the creation of a multi-sector, multiregional STI information and evaluation system that is integrated under a national STI body (existing or newly created)

Source: based on suggestions by IATT and 10-Member-Group. This is work in progress and feedback is welcome. Status: May 2019.

Indicative timeline



In addition, there is a growing number of expert group meetings, outreach and project meetings throughout the IATT collaborations which may be of interest to the 10-Member-Group and to which they are cordially invited.