

Expert Group Meeting on Science, Technology, and Innovation for the SDGs

Meeting of the 10-Member Group of High-level Representatives, the IATT and other experts on high-impact STI4SDSG solutions and in preparation for the Multi-Stakeholder Meeting on Science, Technology, and Innovation for the SDGs and the SDG Summit 2023

United Nations Headquarters, New York, 11-13 January 2023

Organized by DESA, in collaboration with its UNOSD and UNCTAD

Concept Note

The Division for Sustainable Development Goals in the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs (DESA), in collaboration with its UN Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), is organizing a three-day *Expert Group Meeting on Science, Technology, and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs), to help prepare for the 8th STI Forum (3-4 May 2023) as one of the milestones in the preparation for the mid-term review on science, technology and innovation (STI) for the SDGs at the SDG Summit to be held in September 2023. The meeting will be attended by experts and representatives from academia, civil society, private sector, and the UN system.

Context and background

The Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development established the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Mechanism comprises the annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (STI Forum), an online platform (TFM 2030 Connect), the Interagency Task Team on Science, Technology, and Innovation for the SDGs (IATT), and the Secretary General's 10-Member-Group of High-Level Representatives of Private Sector, Civil Society, and the Scientific Communities (10-Member-Group). The IATT brings together 120 expert staff from 47 UN entities and is at present coordinated by DESA and UNCTAD. DESA serves as Secretariat for the 10-Member-Group. The current Group has a two-year mandate until summer 2023.

The 10-Member-Group and IATT are mandated to prepare the STI Forum. The 10-Member-Group typically guides the overall, substantive planning, mobilizes participation, proposes key speakers and moderates most of the formal sessions. The IATT engages substantially, suggests speakers, organizes special and side events, and provides logistical and Secretariat support to the Forum. The President of ECOSOC formally convenes the STI Forum and appoints two Forum co-chairs to provide political guidance, mobilize participation and engagement especially by Member States, supports funding for participation, exhibitions and so on.

The 8th STI Forum will be held at UN headquarters from 3 to 4 May 2023. Its formal sessions are expected to be held in an in-person format with online participation options, which may be supplemented with special and side events and associated events which may be in-person, hybrid

or fully online. In past years, in view of the many initiatives of TFM partners during the week of the Forum, it has been informally referred to as STI week and UN headquarters.

The Permanent Representative of South Africa (H.E. Ms. Mathu Joyini), and UK's Ambassador to the UN Economic and Social Council (H.E Mr. Thomas Woodroffe) have been appointed co-chairs of the 8th STI Forum. Their teams will be invited to the meeting.

The Forum co-chairs summary, issued formally as a note by the UN Secretariat, is a mandated formal input to the SDG review which takes place at the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). In 2023, the HLPF will convene from 10 to 14 July at the level of ECOSOC to review selected SDGs in focus (6, 7, 9, 11, 17), and in September at the level of the UN General Assembly, commonly referred to as "SDG Summit" which will conduct the mid-term review of SDG progress 2015-2023. Hence, the need for the 8th STI Forum to contribute to both the mid-term review as well as the specific SDGs in focus.

In line with its mandate and as in previous years, it is expected that the theme of the STI Forum 2023 will be closely aligned with that of the HLPF 2023: *"Accelerating the recovery from the coronavirus disease and the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels"* at the level of ECOSOC and a focus on the mid-term SDG review at the level of the General Assembly.

STI Forums have worked cumulatively, building on each other and intersessional work, ever since the first such Forum in 2016.

A key element of the cumulative nature is also the intersessional work of the IATT and 10-Member Group, which is an essential part of preparations and follow-up to the STI Forum. Just to give one example of IATT work which has repeatedly informed the STI Forum, namely its global pilot programme for national STI4SDGs roadmaps which was originally launched in 2019. National STI4SDG roadmaps and related plans have proven useful for coordinating actions by multiple stakeholders towards a common goal agreed by governments. They have helped envisioning, planning, facilitating actions, tracking progress, and fostering an inclusive learning environment on STI4SDGs. There is large unmet demand in this regard. By 2021, 20 more countries have expressed an interest in joining the pilot programme, and as of 2022, a broader collaboration network ("Partnership in action on STI4SDGs roadmaps") was launched. In view of the mid-term STI4SDG review in 2023, the present meeting can take stock and identify priorities going forward.

Objectives

The meeting will take stock of progress in harnessing STI for the entire range of SDGs, at the mid-term towards the 2030 SDG targets, and discuss a future vision and global roadmap of what would be most needed in terms of STI to get back on track to achieve the full range of SDGs. In this context, it will support mobilizing STI stakeholders to engage and share their insights and solutions.

In particular, the meeting will focus on high impact innovations and technology solutions in key SDG areas of interest for 2023, including water and sanitation (SDG6), energy and climate (SDG7, SDG13), sustainable cities (SDG11), industry, innovation and infrastructure (SDG9). These SDG

areas also closely overlap with the priority areas of UNOSD which include SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, and 15, hence the close collaboration on the meeting.

The meeting will help conceptualizing the substantive focus and approach for the STI Forum 2023, support the preparation of documentation and key substantive inputs, and also support organizational planning of the Forum.

Finally, the meeting will also be an opportunity to take stock of the work of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism since 2015, in particular its IATT and 10-Member-Group, and to identify lessons-learned for the future.

Structure

The meeting will be organized in support of and around its objectives listed above. Following an opening session and introduction to the meeting, the first part will take up the mid-term review of STI for the SDGs, the future vision, and perspectives on what will be needed in terms of milestones by 2030. The second part will delve deeper into selected STI issues, solutions and proposed actions in the SDG areas in focus and UNOSD priority areas – with a focus on selected issues rather than the whole scope of those SDGs, in view of the fact that those SDGs were already broadly reviewed by previous STI Forums. The third part will discuss substantive focus and organizational planning for the STI Forum. And the fourth part will take stock of TFM lessons learnt and the recent work of IATT and 10-Member-Group, potentially including parallel sessions and online participation. A fifth and final part is expected to include a briefing to UN Member States by the co-chairs of the Forum and the co-chairs of the 10-Member-Group. Additional meetings between the 10-Member-Group and high-level UN officials will also be explored.

Except for the opening and high-level briefings, the remainder of the meeting will be held in a highly interactive, informal roundtable style and will follow the “Chatham House Rule”¹ to encourage open and frank discussions and exchange of ideas. The Secretariat will aim to provide a hybrid online option for participation in at least some parts of the meeting, details of which will be communicated to participants.

Depending on time constraints and level of in-person participation, some of the sessions may be held in parallel. As in the past, one or two closed sessions of the 10-Member-Group is planned at the sidelines of the meeting which shall serve as the formal 10-Member-Group Meeting directed by its co-chairs.

Inputs

In-depth substantive work will be undertaken in preparation of the meeting, in order to ensure effective use of time and focus on products and decisions for the STI Forum. Written inputs may include, but will not be limited to:

- Substantive and ideas contributions:

¹ In particular, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speakers, nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

- Inputs and expressions of interest on the mid-term STI4SDGs review and global roadmap
- Papers, policy briefs, written inputs by 10-Members, IATT, and all interested participants (including on scientific breakthroughs and emerging techs)
- Links to relevant recent UN flagship publications and major event outcomes
- Specifically on the STI Forum:
 - Concept note and draft agenda options for the STI Forum 2023
 - Compilation of written answers to session questions to be communicated by the Secretariat, as well as on results of previous 10-Member-group and IATT discussions on the STI Forum 2023
 - Compilation of outcomes of previous STI Forum outcomes and of relevant regional, sectoral, high-level events and conferences

Expected Outcomes

The main expected outcome of the meeting will be a proceedings report with substantive findings and a set of recommendations for the organization and substantive focus of the STI Forum 2023. Key related outcomes will be progress on the documentation for the Forum, including on session notes, background documents, and the mid-term STI4SDG review and global roadmap. These outputs will build upon lessons-learned from previous years. Example outputs include:

- Broadly on STI4SDG:
 - Substantive notes on key STI issues, findings, solutions and recommendations related to the SDGs in focus
 - Documented progress on the mid-term STI4SDG review and global roadmap
- On the STI Forum:
 - A list of potential key recommendations and outputs expected from the STI Forum
 - A list of suggested high-priority speakers for the Forum
 - A list of IATT/10MG voluntary contributions, and other potential partners, stakeholders, and communities to engage in STI Forum preparations
 - Revised concept note and agenda for the Forum, with options on how to structure and organize the sessions, and key elements of a plan for special and side events, exhibition, innovators competition, etc.
 - Summary of inter-session activities by TFM partners until May 2023

Participation

In-person participation of about 30 to 40 experts is expected, including the current 10-Member Group and selected former Members, STI experts in the UN system, and other experts, practitioners, and major stakeholders of the TFM process. All members of the IATT are invited to participate in principle.