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**The role of science, technology and innovation in accelerating the recovery
from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and the full implementation of the
2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at all levels**

Statement by

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**Statement by Prof. Peyman SALEHI, Deputy Minister for Research,
Ministry of Science, Research and Technology of the Islamic
Republic of Iran at the**

**Ministerial round table on the role of science, technology and
innovation in accelerating the recovery from the pandemic and
the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development at all levels.**

In the Name of God, the Compassionate the Merciful

Mr. Chairman

Honorable Ministers,

Madam Secretary General,

Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Ladies and gentlemen

At the very outset please allow me to appreciate UNCTAD secretariat for the excellent arrangements. I would also like to appreciate all galaxy of thoughts gathered here to confer ideas on science and technology specially focusing on their role on innovation in accelerating the recovery from the pandemic and the implementation of the

SDGs. In fact, the commission is a suitable and timely forum for the discussion on very important issue that is science and technology for development.

Mr. Chairman,

Iran has been well known for its significant contributions to science and technology since ancient times. However, our country has experienced a rather long gap throughout the last centuries. Fortunately, after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, great attention was paid to paving the road to better days by means of heavily investing in STI in Iran. In this regard, currently, Iran has more than 3 million and 200 thousand university students, of which, about 50% are female and more than 750 thousand students are active in postgraduate education. Approximately 30% of our faculty members are female scholars.

In the last two decades, the Iranian government has devised and implemented various policies and programs to support the innovation and establishment of a technological ecosystem. Currently, more than 7 thousand technological and knowledge-based companies are active in advanced technologies such as nanotechnology, biotechnology, cognitive science, and information and communication technologies. Moreover, 58 Science and Technology Parks, 240 Incubators, 61 S&T funds plus 55 private accelerators are part of the great achievement of our country in S&T policy. Besides, there are numerous innovative startups that are growing and maturing in this technological ecosystem.

Iran has witnessed great enhancements in global rank in terms of Scientific Publications, ranking first in West Asia and 15th in the world. The role of our highly-educated women and girls in this growth is undeniable.

Mr. Chairman,

Despite the severe sanctions imposed against us, Iran was one of the few countries able to develop and produce different types of corona vaccines to meet part of its national needs. Several vaccine development projects using various technological platforms were carried out in Iran during this time. These vaccines were based on inactivated virus, recombinant proteins, viral vectors and mRNA technologies. Though some of these domestically developed vaccines did not reach public use during the pandemic, they certainly paved the way to exploit the platforms in other applications, like cancer immunotherapy and gene therapy, too. Besides, such an effort needed novel intersectional partnerships, which led to developing new biopharmaceutical ecosystems encompassing financial, regulatory, research and development, and manufacturing partners. This ecosystem, after its maturation, will be an invaluable tool for medicine developments in the future, including accelerated responses to the possible upcoming pandemics.

Mr. Chairman,

Iran not only manufactured the needed instruments such as ventilators, oxygen generators, CT scans and so on, but also exported them to many other countries.

In spite of the aforementioned implications, we have never stopped our research, technology and educational activities during the pandemic by the help of our powerful infrastructure that had been provided for such circumstances.

It is also noteworthy that, Iran has had the least number of fatalities in the recent outbreak of Coronavirus, leaving many very zero-death toll days as well as the fewest number of infected people.

While the pandemic imposed quite a few obstacles for the Iranian society, it culminated in our growth in various fields such as electronic-based education. We seem to have entered a completely new phase of education as we have noticed the significance of remote learning based on electronic platforms. Thus, we expect more attention to this type of education as a complement to traditional methods even though the pandemic is nearly over. As a result, the following strategies have been employed by Iran's educational system:

- Development of hybrid- and metaverse-based educational methods instead of fully separating virtual learning from attending in-person classes
- Improving tele-lab and virtual lab infrastructure
- Developing electronic simulators, aiming at real experiencing the workshop atmosphere

- Taking into consideration tele-learning seriously through allocating certain budgets, plus devising the required bureaucratic and technological infrastructure (*i.e.* server farms) to officially support e-learning in universities

Therefore, in the post Covid-19 era, our focus would be on transformation from traditional to hybrid educational system. The purpose of creating hybrid learning system is increasing the quality of education and active participation of students. To cope with the challenges left by the webinar-based technology, it is necessary to promote interactive education and equip classes with new technologies. Due to the past developments and lessons learned, investment in this field has been invigorated.

Mr. Chairman,

We strongly believe that knowledge production will improve vigorously the social welfare of the people. Hence, scholars should not be confined to certain boundaries but they should belong to all humanity. Iran's ministry of science, research and technology believes that when borderlines are lifted for scholars and scientists, merchants and tourists, the level of tension will be lessened significantly. Therefore, scientific diplomacy is certainly the lost piece of economic, cultural, political, social, and security diplomacies.

Knowledge production and consumption is the backbone to humans' shared interests and unity. Accordingly, the interests of all mankind are provided through the production of science and technology, and all people are stakeholders of the human

knowledge pool. Regarding the development of science and technology, the approach of the Islamic Republic of Iran is sustainable development with a forward-looking view toward humans and the environment. In this regard, we welcome interactions and exchanges of science and technology with all interested countries and consider science and technology diplomacy as one of the key tools for international cooperation.

Iran express its readiness to promote scientific and technological collaborations through the exchange of researchers and scientists, joint funding and sharing of infrastructures, as well as holding technology exchange programs among interested countries.

Mr. Chairman,

We are of the belief that to achieve SDGs especially at all levels and to expedite the process of recovery from pandemic, science and technology play crucial role that no one can turn a blind eye to the fact. Therefore, bearing in mind that achieving SDGs and recovery from pandemic are priorities of all nations particularly developing and the least developed countries, technology transfer should come into the international agenda to enable developing countries particularly the least developed countries to cope with the challenges. As it was said by H.E. Mr. Banki Moon, the then UN Secretary General, global problems require global solutions, our developed partners are encouraged to show more flexibility on technology transfer.

Mr. Chairman,

We believe that UN can play crucial role on technology transfer areas. In fact, political will of the countries, particularly developed countries, will facilitate the developing countries to cope with the challenges ahead particularly in probable future pandemic and achieving the SDGs. It comes true when it is accompanied by suitable framework along with conducive enabling environment.

Concluding my words, I would like to reiterate that among all cascading challenges including recovery from pandemic and climate change, Unilateral sanctions, against UN charter and international law, has hindered the sanctioned countries of the kind to achieve SDGs. Therefore, States are strongly urged to refrain from promulgating and applying any unilateral sanctions.

Thank you so much for your kind attention.