United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD)
Twenty-second Annual Session

High-level Roundtable on
"Review of progress made in the implementation of World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes'"

14 May 2019, 3 p.m.
Room XVII, E-building, Palais des Nations

Concept Note

1. Background

During the twenty-second annual session of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), a High-level Roundtable will be held on the afternoon of 14 May 2019, under the theme of '*Review of progress made in the implementation of World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) outcomes.*' The Roundtable will focus on opportunities and challenges posed by information and communications technologies (ICTs) for achieving the WSIS vision of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society within the dual context of rapid technological change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The nature of the Information Society has changed profoundly since the Summit. Despite the continued progress in access, use and application of ICTs, much more needs to be done, however, to achieve internationally agreed goals of connectivity for all and to maximize the value of ICTs in sustainable development. At the same time, the rapid pace of change in ICTs is transforming expectations about future economic, social and cultural development. Digital innovations are transforming lives and offering new opportunities to reinforce and invigorate efforts to achieve the SDGs. Innovations in communications and computing, artificial intelligence and machine learning, robotics and algorithmic decision-making are expected to have even more profound impacts on the development of human society than those experienced since WSIS. To meet the opportunities and challenges arising from these innovations will require greater understanding of present and future developments, innovation in governance and business management, and greater cooperation in governance as well as in technology and services.

The 2030 Agenda recognizes that the spread of ICTs and global interconnectedness has great potential to accelerate human progress, bridge the digital divide and develop knowledge societies. ICTs permeate profoundly today's economy and society and should be major drivers of progress towards achieving all the SDGs. Highlighting this potential, the General-Assembly (A/RES/70/125) has called for close alignment between the WSIS process and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. Objectives

The current context of rapid technological change stresses the need to incorporate a forward-looking perspective to the assessment of progress of WSIS outcomes. It is necessary that the assessment should take into account not only progress and current challenges, but it also should help to identify emerging and future challenges to the implementation. In this context, the

Roundtable will provide an opportunity for high-level policymakers to exchange experiences, lessons learned and good practices, and to discuss challenges faced at national, regional and international levels as well as challenges affecting groups of societies. The outcome of the session will feed into the high-level political forum on sustainable development under the auspices of the Council.

3. Questions for discussion

The following questions will guide the discussion:

- What are best practices and policies that can help countries to implement ICTs for sustainable development in the current context of rapid technological change?

- From your perspective, what are the emerging and future issues that may have an impact ont the development potential of ICTs?

- From your perspective, and given the context of fast technological change what are urgent actions needed to reap the development opportunities provided by ICTs for the SDGs?

- What are best practices/lessons learned to reduce the digital divide, particularly in women and girls and marginalized groups?

- What can the international community do to contribute to achieve the WSIS vision of a people-centred, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society within the dual context of rapid technological change and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

4. Format of the High-Level Roundtable:

Following a brief introduction by the moderator, the Keynote speaker will address the Commission. After this, high-level participants will make their initial interventions (5-8 minutes), broadly addressing the guiding questions. After this the moderator will initiate an interactive discussion among the participants, including those from the floor.

5. Supporting documents

A/74/62-E/2019/6 "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels"

E/CN.16/2019/CRP.2 "Implementing World Summit on the Information Society outcomes, 2018"

Documents available on the website of the CSTD:
https://unctad.org/en/pages/MeetingDetails.aspx?meetingid=1892