



#YOUTH2030

6th Economic and Social Council Youth Forum CONCEPT NOTE

“Role of Technology in Implementing and Monitoring the SDGs”

30 January 2017
Trusteeship Council Chamber
4:30 – 6:00 pm
United Nations Headquarters, New York

1. Background and Context

Technology and innovation are central to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). When utilized effectively, technology can be mobilized to identify barriers to and provide solutions for sustainable development challenges from the local to global level. Furthermore, the science-policy interface has become an increasingly important component of the UN system in order to guide evidence-based sustainable development policy design, implementation, follow-up and review. It has also been integral in identifying emerging needs, drawing links between the interconnected nature of thematic issues, and devising solutions to address challenges and barriers to progress.

Living in an increasingly sociotechnical world, locally-informed and context-appropriate applications of science and technology are crucial to ensure long-term resilience of development efforts. The process through which information is generated as an outcome of advances in science and engineering should be delinked from underlying biases when interpreting and applying knowledge for policy making. Strategies for assessing the potential benefits and risks, both intended and unintended, of emerging technologies are crucial to better inform the design, development, and scaling through innovations.

Finding a balance between the validation and introduction of technologies that bring gains to society will require a deeper understanding of how to project the social, economic, and environmental impact of innovations across different contexts. Responsible leadership within the scientific and engineering communities is crucial to drive appropriate technology use, especially in cases where dual use research of concern exists. Increasing importance placed on citizen science also gives civil society a unique opportunity and responsibility to contribute to these discussions. In an effort to “leave no one behind” it is important to highlight the role of both formal and informal knowledge systems for complementary and appropriate technology



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development and assessment, as well as enhance opportunities for women and girls in science to work towards closing the gender divide and intergenerational gaps as well.

To reap the full benefits of technologies, it is also important to understand the social, cultural, political, regulatory, environmental, and economic factors influencing access to technologies. This includes several ongoing policy agendas within the UN system: intellectual property rights, technology transfer mechanisms, technology banks, efforts to strengthen statistical capacity, and more.

Young people, as the torchbearers of the 2030 Agenda, play a lead role in the development and use of new technology, and have been trailblazers in the creation of technological and media solutions to some of our most pressing developmental challenges. They are creative, technologically adept, and informed of their local community needs.

Young people have been at the fore of developing technological tools and media solutions, which enhance collaboration and innovation through online engagement, as well as concrete social and humanitarian responses for our most pressing challenges.

Yet, many young people also lack access to reliable internet and the infrastructure necessary to leverage technological advances. Ensuring the development and access to robust technological infrastructure and information, as well as education and learning, is central to ensuring technology can be utilized appropriately in the implementation of the SDGs.

2. Objectives

On 6 and 7 June 2016, the President of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), Oh Joon, convened the first annual multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals. The forum provided a venue for facilitating interaction, matchmaking and the establishment of networks between relevant stakeholders and multi-stakeholder partnerships in order to identify and examine technology needs and gaps, including with respect to scientific cooperation, innovation and capacity-building, and to help facilitate the development, transfer and dissemination of relevant technologies for the SDGs. A plenary session was dedicated to discussing the role of young scientists and innovators in contributing these efforts. This component of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, an outcome of the 2030 Agenda, is one of many complementary science-policy avenues within the UN system, such as the UNCTAD Commission on Science & Technology for Development, UNFCCC Technology Mechanism, UNISDR Science & Technology Roadmap for the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and others across different sustainable development frameworks that feed into the High-Level Political Forum.



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Further to this Forum, the ECOSOC Youth Forum seeks to open a dialogue on the key ways young practitioners (scientists, engineers, innovators, technicians, etc.) can contribute to the development and use of new technologies for sustainable development.

In particular, the session will discuss:

- 1) Benefits from and barriers to enhancing the role of young practitioners in driving appropriate development and use of innovative technologies to overcome challenges in sustainable development;
- 2) Contributions youth have made to information communication technologies and digital tools that promote community-based participatory engagement;
- 3) Contributions from youth to the development of technology for developmental challenges, as well as communicating technology needs and use;
- 4) Access to technology and information to equip youth with skills and tools .

3. Issues at stake/Plenary focus

Moderator: Erhardt Graeff, MIT Center for Civic Media

Panelists

- **Zain Habboo, Senior Director for Digital and Multimedia Strategy, UN Foundation**
- **James Powell, UNICEF U-REPORT**
- **Zoe Carletide, World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)**
- **Jake Horowitz, MIC**
- **Nevena Vukasinovic, UN Major Group for Children & Youth, Science-Policy Interface Platform**

Technology for development

- Technology can act as a safe space for civil society and governments to engage each other at scale if it is fully embraced by everyone involved. UNICEF offers a number of modalities for engagement in and around SDGs including technology. The panel will discuss the UNICEF U-Report, which proves the scalability and the demand for young people to be part of the development process. The U-Report already has over 2.5 million young people as members and another young person joins the project every 30 seconds. Present in 30 countries and now accessible globally the tool uses open-source messaging software and partnerships with major social networks to stimulate the conversation around SDGs, support implementation, monitor progress and improve accountability.

Social Media Engagement



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- Widespread Internet connectivity has enabled young people to engage in a variety of causes and campaigns from local to global levels. Via social media platforms youth can be exposed to and participate in a variety of political, civic and environmental related causes, signing petitions, blogging, and video blogging about issues of concern to them. There is increasing potential to draw awareness to issues of social and environmental justice,

Avenues for engagement

- The panel will provide an overview of avenues for engaging youth in science-policy and technology-related fora within the UN system - as well as maximizing their meaningful participation through the open and coordinated space of the UN Major Group for Children and Youth, notably through its Youth SPI Platform and Launch of the Youth Commission on science, engineering, and technology for SDGs.

4. Plenary Session Format

- 5 min: Opening and Speaker Introductions
- 45 min: Prepared Comments by Speakers
- 25 min: Moderated Conversation among Panelists
- 25 min: Open Q&A with Audience

5. Questions for the Audience

- What measures must be undertaken to bridge the technological divide?
- How can we foster the conditions for youth engagement in the development of technological solutions to key developmental challenges?
- How can youth digital engagement via social media be harnessed into real world solutions to implement the sustainable development goals?
- How can technology be used to benefit and enhance the engagement of the “invisible” young people?
- How can young scientists, engineers, and practitioners participate through designated institutional spaces, and contribute positively to the SDGs through their role in tech-facilitation, transfer and innovation?
- What challenges and solutions do youth face in building partnerships in science, technology, and innovation efforts?
- How are youth already leveraging appropriate technologies in their local communities to achieve the SDGs?



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- Why are youth important to enhancing the nexus of science, policy, and society?
- What best practices do you have to share on communicating science, science education, and making it accessible to all?
- When there is no "one size fit all" solution with technologies, how can we effectively innovate while still integrating local practices and traditional knowledge that reflect contexts?
- Harnessing the tools of Science, Technology and Innovation are needed to turn ambitions into reality. However, the impacts of technologies are often unclear and can take many years to surface. How can we implement impact assessments to track system-wide effects of technologies to better inform decisions, design, and delivery?
- What tools should be provided to youth to critically analyse increasing amounts of information accumulated via social media, web platforms, and other “big data” applications so they can enhance their understanding of progress, trends, and emerging solutions in sustainable development?

6. Suggested reading materials

Reports

- World Youth Report: Youth Civic Engagement (see chapter on digital activism)
http://www.unworldyouthreport.org/images/docs/un_world_youth_report_youth_civic_engagement.pdf
- UNICEF U-Report <http://www.ureport.in/>
- Multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals: summary by the Co-Chairs Note by the President of the Economic and Social Council http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/HLPF/2016/6&Lang=E