General Assembly

Seventy-fifth session
Agenda item 136
**Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement
of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets**

Resolution adopted by the General Assembly on 17 August 2021

[*without reference to a Main Committee (A/75/L.123 and A/75/L.123/Add.1)*]

75/316. Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets

The General Assembly,

Considering that technological change includes new and powerful tools that can help to realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,[1] mindful that the impact, opportunities and challenges of rapid technological change on sustainable development are being assessed in order to deepen their understanding, and recalling its resolution 73/17 of 26 November 2018, in which it decided to continue discussing the topic "Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets",

Noting that rapid technological change can contribute to the faster achievement of the 2030 Agenda by improving real incomes, enabling faster and wider deployment of novel solutions to economic, social and environmental obstacles, supporting more inclusive forms of participation in social and economic life, replacing environmentally costly modes of production with more sustainable ones and giving policymakers powerful tools to design and plan development interventions,

Recalling its resolutions 69/313 of 27 July 2015 and 70/1 of 25 September 2015, in which it established and launched a Technology Facilitation Mechanism to support the Sustainable Development Goals, whose updated findings on this topic, as well as those of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, were presented and discussed at its sixth multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals,

Recalling also its resolutions 75/202 of 21 December 2020, 74/229 of 19 December 2019, 74/247 of 27 December 2019, 75/1 of 21 September 2020, 75/176

_____
[1] Resolution 70/1.

of 16 December 2020 and 75/267 of 25 March 2021, and other relevant resolutions, including Economic and Social Council resolution 2020/13 of 17 July 2020 on science, technology and innovation for development, as well as its decision 75/564 of 28 April 2021, and noting the developments in the work on emerging technologies by several United Nations system entities,

Recalling further the commitment on harnessing science, technology and innovation with a greater focus on digital transformation for sustainable development, to promote research, capacity-building initiatives, innovation and technologies, towards the achievement of the Goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda, and in this regard recognizing that rapid technological change can contribute, inter alia, to advancements in health, energy, agriculture and food security, governance, education, economy, finance, employment, social welfare and inclusion, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and sustainable consumption and production patterns,

Noting the establishment of the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology,

Noting with appreciation the convening of the annual multi-stakeholder forums on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as the ongoing work of the United Nations inter-agency task team on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, including the Global Pilot Programme on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals Road Maps (STI for SDGs road maps) to support strategic tools for ensuring policy coherence, linking public and private actions, and optimizing investments, and looking forward to the expanded operationalization of the 2030 Connect online platform as a gateway for information on existing science, technology and innovation initiatives, mechanisms and programmes, as the three components of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism,

Taking note of the report of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation, entitled "The age of digital interdependence", submitted to the Secretary-General, the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Road map for digital cooperation: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation",[2] the report of the Secretary-General's Task Force on Digital Financing of the Sustainable Development Goals, entitled *People's Money: Harnessing Digitalization to Finance a Sustainable Future*, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development *Technology and Innovation Report 2021* and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights: Implementing the United Nations "Protect, Respect and Remedy" Framework,[3]

Noting with grave concern that almost half of the world's population, more than four in five people in the least developed countries, and people in vulnerable situations do not have access to the Internet, and that numerous barriers such as the installation of costly broadband connections, difficulties in financing the fibre-optic technologies required, unfavourable market dynamics, lower purchasing power in the least developed countries as a limiting factor for connectivity providers and the lack of digital skills and digital literacy exacerbate digital divides and can limit the adoption of digital tools,

Stressing the need to close all digital divides, which have been aggravated by the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, both between and within countries and including rural-urban, youth-older persons and gender digital divides, and to promote digital inclusion, by taking into account national and regional contexts and

---

[2] A/74/821.
[3] A/HRC/17/31, annex.

addressing the challenges associated with access, affordability, digital literacy and digital skills and awareness and by ensuring that the benefits of new technologies are available to all, taking into account the needs of those who are in vulnerable situations, and noting the efforts to help to bridge digital divides and expand access, including the Connect 2030 Agenda for Global Telecommunication/Information and Communication Technology, including Broadband, for Sustainable Development,

Recognizing that rapid technological change has enormous potential to support the advancement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, by reducing the gender digital divide, providing them with opportunities to obtain and share information, gain access to health and education services and to engage in networking and have their voices heard and providing women with opportunities to gain access to employment and to generate income, while also recognizing that it might create challenges for progress, and welcoming the initiatives that focus on access, skills and leadership to promote the equal participation of women and girls in the digital age, and recognizing also that digital technologies can play an important role for women and girls to exercise all human rights, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and in women's full, equal and effective participation in political, economic, cultural and social life,

Recognizing also the contributions of the United Nations Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries in facilitating access to and implementation of digital technologies, as well as in assisting the digital transformation of least developed countries in their sustainable development, and the important role to be played by the Bank in narrowing the digital gap between least developed countries and developed countries,

Reaffirming that the creation, development and diffusion of new innovations and technologies and associated know-how, including the transfer of technology on mutually agreed terms, are powerful drivers of economic growth and sustainable development,

Reaffirming also that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, and emphasizing that adaptation to rapid technological change should be considered not only as a function of sustainable development and the spreading of information and communications technologies, but also with respect to the realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Acknowledging that an effective Internet Governance Forum and multi-stakeholder approaches are needed to drive the digital transition for the benefit of all, and to facilitate global digital cooperation,

Reaffirming the value and principles of multi-stakeholder cooperation and engagement that have characterized the World Summit on the Information Society process since its inception, and recognizing that the effective participation, partnership and cooperation of all stakeholders, within their respective roles and responsibilities, especially with balanced representation from developing countries, have been and continue to be vital in developing the information society,

Recalling the high-level thematic debate convened by the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session on the impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals on 11 June 2020, and noting the one-day high-level thematic debate on digital cooperation and connectivity convened by the President of the General Assembly at its seventy-fifth session on 27 April 2021,

Recognizing the need for Governments, the private sector, international organizations, civil society, the technical and academic communities, along with other stakeholders, to be aware of the impacts of the latest developments in rapid

technological change on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which continue to require international and multi-stakeholder cooperation, including in diverse forums, such as the Internet Governance Forum, in order to benefit from opportunities brought up by the global and open Internet and address multidimensional challenges, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development, and respecting national policies and priorities,

1. *Encourages* Member States to continue to consider the impact of key rapid technological changes on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets[4] in order to benefit from opportunities and address challenges, promote the development of national strategies and public policies, science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals road maps (STI for SDGs road maps), capacity-building and scientific engagement, and share best practices;

2. *Urges* Member States and other stakeholders to take actions to bridge the digital and knowledge divides, recognizing that approaches must be multidimensional and include an evolving understanding of what constitutes access, emphasizing the quality of that access, and acknowledges that speed, stability, affordability, language, local content and accessibility for persons with disabilities are now core elements and that high-speed broadband is already an essential enabler of sustainable development;

3. *Stresses* the need to provide universal and affordable access to the Internet by 2030, including meaningful use of digitally enabled services, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, and welcomes efforts by the United Nations to assist Member States, upon their request, in achieving this;

4. *Reaffirms* that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, including the right to privacy, with special regard given to the protection of children;

5. *Calls upon* Member States to consider adopting or maintaining data protection legislation, regulation and policies, including on digital communication data, that comply with their international human rights obligations, which could include the establishment of national independent authorities with powers and resources to monitor data privacy practices, investigate violations and abuses and receive communications from individuals and organizations, and to provide appropriate remedies;

6. *Urges* Member States and other stakeholders to close digital divides and promote digital inclusion, by taking into account national and regional contexts and addressing the challenges associated with access, affordability, digital literacy and digital skills, including media and information literacy, and by ensuring that the benefits of new technologies are available to all, taking into account the needs of those who are in vulnerable situations as well as addressing intersectionality, negative social norms, language barriers, structural barriers and risks, and encourages cooperation between the United Nations development system and programme countries, in line with their national policies and priorities, in order to promote and improve digital inclusion;

7. *Encourages* Member States and all stakeholders to close the gender digital divide, including by eliminating barriers to women's full, equal and effective participation both offline and in digital contexts, increasing women's and girls' access to digital technologies, promoting equal, safe and affordable access to information and communications technologies and to the Internet, enhancing women's and girls' digital literacy and women's entrepreneurship, improving digital cooperation and harnessing the potential of rapid technological change to improve the lives of women

_____

[4] See resolution 70/1.

and girls, and promoting connectivity and socioeconomic prosperity, and to address the development divide, digital divides and the gender digital divide, addressing any potential negative impacts of digital technologies on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls;

8.   *Urges* Member States and other stakeholders to strengthen the role that rapid technological change can play in mitigating the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and to strengthen digital cooperation in the areas of e-commerce, financial technology, digital capacity-building, affordable and reliable Internet connectivity and digital infrastructure to achieve an inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery and build back better after the COVID-19 pandemic and to take concerted action to further strengthen scientific research, emerging technologies and new data sources and to build resilient, inclusive and integrated data and statistical systems, under the leadership of national statistical offices, that can respond to the increased and urgent data demands in times of disaster and ensure a path towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals;

9.   *Encourages* the promotion of digital solutions through access to and use of digital public goods, which may include open-source software, open data, open artificial intelligence models, open standards and open content that adhere to international and domestic laws, in unlocking the full potential of rapid technological change to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

10.   *Recognizes* the need for more coordinated and scaled-up global digital capacity-building efforts and stronger capacity-building support at the country level, including in areas such as an appropriate enabling environment, sufficient resources, infrastructure, education, investment, connectivity, growing digital economies, and sustainable and inclusive digital development, and thus encourages the Secretary-General to continue working with all United Nations entities and other relevant stakeholders to strengthen efforts in this regard;

11.   *Stresses* the importance of rapid technological change in ensuring food security by 2030, and encourages the adoption of the most advanced and appropriate information technology in agriculture systems, and calls for enhanced international cooperation to facilitate access and promote investment in clean energy research, technology and infrastructure, in accordance with Goal 7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

12.   *Encourages* Member States to continue and further strengthen engagement with all relevant stakeholders, such as the private sector, in particular technology companies and financial institutions, civil society, the technical and research communities, including scientists and academia, recognizing that open and inclusive multi-stakeholder cooperation is critical to best harness the potential of rapidly accelerating technologies to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, while addressing their possible challenges;

13.   *Recognizes* the need for different parts of the United Nations system to better harness digital technologies, in accordance with their respective mandates, and in this regard encourages the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology to support collaboration within and across the United Nations system, avoiding any duplication of efforts and enhancing transparency;

14.   *Requests* the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, through the Economic and Social Council, to continue to consider, in a coordinated manner within their respective mandates and existing resources, the impact of rapid technological changes and frontier technologies on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets,

and to align this endeavour with the follow-up cycle of the high-level political forum on sustainable development in order to support the efforts of all countries towards the attainment of the Goals, including through forging partnerships with other relevant actors, organizations, initiatives and forums, and the dissemination of advances and best practices to facilitate cooperation towards this end;

15. *Reiterates* the mandate of the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals,[5] and encourages Member States and all stakeholders to consider its outcomes in relevant forums;

16. *Invites* the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Technology Facilitation Mechanism to strengthen synergies and mutually reinforce their work on science, technology and innovation, and requests the Secretariat to coordinate the dates of their meetings in order to avoid overlap and to ensure coherence and coordination between both entities;

17. *Reiterates its call for* voluntary contributions for resources from both the private and the public sectors to support the full operationalization of all components of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, in particular strengthening national capacities in promoting the access of marginalized communities to science, technology and innovation through STI for SDGs road maps and the online platform, and invites Member States to provide voluntary financial and technical assistance to the United Nations Technology Bank for the Least Developed Countries to enable it to reach its full potential, which will also bolster its effectiveness in mitigating the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic;

18. *Calls for* better coordination and coherence among existing mechanisms, including the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology, the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and other United Nations agencies and international organizations, within their respective mandates, in providing support to Member States in the field of rapid technological change directed towards development priorities and needs;

19. *Brings to the attention* of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination the importance for the diverse United Nations entities, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, to take into consideration the issue of rapid technological change, within their respective mandates, bearing in mind the three dimensions and the integrated and indivisible nature of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets;

20. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-seventh session the item entitled "Impact of rapid technological change on the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and targets", in order to discuss the progress made in the implementation of the present resolution, including the presentation of the work of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, unless otherwise agreed;

21. *Requests* the Secretary-General, in collaboration with his Envoy on Technology, to submit to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session an action-oriented report, within existing resources, on the implementation of the present resolution, taking into account other relevant processes and documents.

98th plenary meeting
17 August 2021

———————

———————

[5] Ibid., para. 70.