

**“High-level Briefing on Frontier Technologies for Sustainable Development:
Findings from the World Economic and Social Survey 2018”.**

November 1st, 2018, Conference Room 7, 1:15-2:30 PM

Agenda

Introductory statement by Mr. Eliot Harris, Assistant Secretary General DESA/Chief Economist

Presentation of the main findings by Mr. Hamid Rashid, Chief, Development Research Branch

Panel discussion

Moderator: Mr. Eliot Harris, Assistant Secretary General DESA/Chief Economist

Comments by H.E. Mr. Juan Sandoval Mendiola, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of Mexico to the United Nations

Comments by H.E. Mr. Philip Ochen Odida, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative Uganda to the United Nations

Comment by Mr. Abdoulaye Mar Dieye, Assistant Secretary General, Head of UNDP's Bureau for Policy and Programme Support (TBC)

Questions and Answers from the Audience

Concept note

The World Economic and Social Survey 2018 looks at how frontier technologies can help sustainable development – how they can improve our lives and livelihoods and protect the planet. Rapid and transformative advances in artificial intelligence, autonomous vehicles, biotechnology, renewable energy technologies, among others, are already offering immense hopes for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Yet, it is not a given that new technologies will make life better for all. Without appropriate policies, they can undermine social cohesion, inclusion and equity.

A common message in the 2018 Survey is that technology is neither exogenous nor neutral. Societal needs and policy prerogatives must guide development, diffusion and adoption of new technologies. A window of opportunity exists to influence the pace and sequence of new technologies to promote the common good, prosperity and human dignity and protect the environment. The Survey provides an understanding of the distributional and ethical consequences of a number of frontier technologies. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics and automation, among other technologies, can enhance economic efficiency but at the same time create winners and losers. Policymakers must know the costs and benefits of these technologies as they design policies and regulations to steer their future trajectory.

The Survey identifies policy measures at national levels to maximize the potential of these technologies, and mitigate their risks, striking a balance among economic efficiency, equity and ethical considerations. It makes a case for providing incentives for development, diffusion and adoption of appropriate and enabling technologies, while increasing investments in education, skills development, and social protection.

The Survey also recognizes that no nation alone can manage the impact of frontier technologies, which transcend sectoral and national boundaries. It calls for global collective action to manage technological breakthroughs, ensuring they benefit all and no one is left behind. It highlights the imperatives of greater international cooperation, in setting norms and standards, facilitating technology transfers, ensuring fair market competition and promoting effective tax cooperation.

The analysis and policy recommendations put forward in this Survey are intended to spark a conversation and engagement with Member States, industries, academia, and civil society. The High-level briefing, organized in the context of Resolution 72/242 of the General Assembly, aims to facilitate dialogues and forge a greater understanding of the impact of rapid technological on the achievement of the SDGs.

The following questions are intended to guide the deliberations of the high-level briefing:

- What could be the major trade-offs between efficiency and equity with the adoption of some of these technologies?
- How can policy makers foster the right balance between fostering new technologies and generating benefits equitably, across countries and individuals?
- What are the special challenges and opportunities that new technologies pose for sustainable development in technologically less advanced economies?
- What role should the international community and the UN play to maximize the net benefits of new technologies in order to achieve the SDGs?
- How can the UN be a global platform to bring together all stakeholders to establish necessary ethical frameworks and norm-setting mechanisms?