

# TASMUN

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# Harnessing Rapid Technological Change for Inclusive and Sustainable Development

## Report of the Secretary General

### *Summary*

The following report outlines the topic of Harnessing Rapid Technological Change for Inclusive and Sustainable Development and is an extended branch from Sustainable Development Goal 10. This topic first emerged in the United Nations Economic and Social Council Commission on Science and Technological for Development, a forum that helps frame and proposes ideas, experiences, cases, and intellectual thought on the current critical issues influencing the fields of science and technology today.<sup>1</sup> This topic discusses a key problem that the world is facing in the 21st century; at a time of fast technological changes. The current rapid technological advancement has led to the opening of many opportunities while cutting down many that used to be present. Therefore, countries need to ensure that going forward, people are taking advantage of these changes to help progress towards achieving sustainable development goals. Technological changes provide multiple opportunities to achieve the sustainable development goals however also have the potential to disrupt progress.

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. "UNCTAD | About the CSTD." Unctad.Org, UNCTAD, [unctad.org/en/Pages/CSTD/CSTD-About.aspx](https://unctad.org/en/Pages/CSTD/CSTD-About.aspx). Accessed 27 Jan. 2020.

# I. Introduction

1. Humans have been around for 200,000 years. Evolution would not be possible without the advancements of technology. In our meeting, technology will be defined as the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes such as those dealing with machinery and equipment.
2. Modern technology advancements are designed and used in a way that develops inequalities. For example, AI assistants such as the ones on smartphones often have a default female voice, which notes the existence of gender stereotypes in digital devices and directly links to the inequality between male and female service preference. However, while the technological example shows an inequality where females are inferior to men, the general notion and a majority of statistics show otherwise in which women spend, on average, twice as much time on unpaid housework as men.<sup>2</sup> The digitalization of government and welfare services even though intended to reduce carbon footprint with the decrease of paperwork is another example of an inequality caused by rapid technological change as it indirectly punishes those who do not have digital access or skills.
3. A country's workforce is often affected by the advancements of technology. As AI and robots continue to grow in intelligence, employees performing routine tasks in the labor market are often being substituted for the cheaper alternative. While these issues are undoubtedly increasing in numbers, many governments fail to address them due to the mechanisms involved with the risks of technological unemployment. These risks include health issues such as depression and anxiety due to loss of income as well as a decrease in consumption of fruits and vegetables for the family because of the change in diet. This

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Development Programme. "Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities | UNDP." UNDP, 2010, [www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-10-reduced-inequalities.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-10-reduced-inequalities.html). Accessed 29 Jan. 2020.

may also affect children's health in the long run with risks of undernourished children which may hinder growth both physically and mentally.<sup>3</sup>

4. Inequalities in technology can also be seen between countries often referred to as the “technological gap” between developed and developing nations. Country development is vital to the success of a country, but because More Economically Developed Countries (MEDCs) tend to have more resources compared to Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs), the rate of development would be evident. However, certain LEDCs do have a geographic advantage and this will help promote international technological assessments which will help the international community understand the effects of rapid technological change and its impact on inequality and sustainable development.
5. In order to promote the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” by 2030, the date in which the SDGs should be achieved, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) reported that appropriate developments of science, technology, and innovation (STI) must be made. These growths will empower economically, encourage diversification, and increase employment rates.
6. CSTD has developed specific goals within the SDGs such as but not limited to focusing on technological gaps, equality and inclusiveness of all people, implementing technology for improved education, resources, and improved work and economic growth.<sup>4</sup>
7. In this meeting, we will focus on Goal 10 which is to “[r]educe inequality within and among countries.” Primarily, the goal's targets vows to reduce inequalities by promoting inclusion of all regardless of sex, race, or ethnicity.<sup>5</sup> According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), measures such as improving the monitoring of financial institutions, encouraging assistance investments and programs are keys to

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<sup>3</sup> Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. “Consequences of Unemployment.” *Econlowdown.Org*, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, 2019, [www.econlowdown.org/consequences\\_of\\_unemployment?module\\_uid=235&section\\_uid=419&page\\_num=2826&p=yes](http://www.econlowdown.org/consequences_of_unemployment?module_uid=235&section_uid=419&page_num=2826&p=yes). Accessed 20 Jan. 2020.

<sup>4</sup> CSTD. “Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) Contribution to the High-Level Political Forum.” *Sustainable Development Goals*, CSTD, 15 Jan. 2019, [sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21761HLPF\\_2019\\_CSTD\\_inputs\\_14March2019\\_rev1.pdf](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21761HLPF_2019_CSTD_inputs_14March2019_rev1.pdf). Accessed 20 Jan. 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

linking inequalities.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the United Nations (UN) also reported that innovations in technology is also a solution to this target. Moreover, children in the poorest 20% are up to three times more likely to die before their fifth birthday compared to children in the richest quintiles, reinforcing the aforementioned risk of unemployment.<sup>7</sup>

8. Various Targets and Indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals are relevant to the topic of “Harnessing Rapid Technological Change for Inclusive and Sustainable Development”.
9. Target 10.1: Progressively achieve and sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population at a rate higher than the national average by 2030. A current concern that is currently growing is the wealth gap between the rich and the poor, not only between individual countries but also the world. We must find a way to minimize the gap in order to reduce inequalities around the world. A common tool that is used all around the world is technology. It can be used as a benefit or a setback when it comes to solving the issue of reducing inequalities. Therefore, our ultimate goal is to harness rapid technological growth and minimize the wealth gap among humans to help sustain income growth of the bottom 40% of the population.
10. Target 10.2: by 2030 empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.
11. Target 10.3: ensure equal opportunity and reduce inequalities of outcome, including through eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and actions in this regard.
12. Target 10.4: adopt policies especially fiscal, wage, and social protection policies and progressively achieve greater equality.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Martin. “Reduce Inequality within and among Countries - United Nations Sustainable Development.” United Nations Sustainable Development, 2018, [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/). Accessed 29 Jan. 2020.

13. Target 10.5: improve regulation and monitoring of global financial markets and institutions and strengthen implementation of such regulations.
14. Target 10.6: ensure enhanced representation and voice of developing countries in decision making in global international economic and financial institutions in order to deliver more effective, credible, accountable and legitimate institutions.
15. Target 10.a: implement the principle of special and differential treatment for developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in accordance with World Trade Organization (WTO) agreements.
16. Target 10.b: encourage Official Development Assistance (ODA) and financial flows, including foreign direct investment, to states where the need is greatest, in particular Less Developed Countries (LDCs), African countries, Small Island Developing States (SIDs) and Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs), in accordance with their national plans and programs.
17. Target 10.c: by 2030, reduce to less than 3% [of] the transaction costs of migrant remittances and eliminate remittance corridors with costs higher than 5%.

## **II. Challenges**

18. Humans had been undoubtedly working towards tackling major global issues; however, it is indisputable that we would run into significant obstacles or challenges along the way. The issue presented at hand is "Harnessing Rapid Technological Change for Inclusive and Sustainable Development." It is possible that rapid technological changes will lead to increased amounts of inequalities. Therefore, it is crucial that we learn to harness these changes in a positive aspect to help solve the problem at hand.
19. It is without a doubt that many are afraid of the rapid technological advancements in the past decades along with the rise of Artificial Intelligence(AI) that may one day overtake humans. Challenges that will potentially arise are majorly due to the future of the world, falling into the hands of those who have control over these technologies one day overtake

humans. It is without hesitation that we conclude that those who have the ability to control AI are those from a higher class of status as they would be the only ones able to produce such technological advances. People of a higher class would have the financial capabilities to truly devote to producing technological advances. That is not to say that Universities and Governments are incapable of doing so, however those who come out on top are committed to devoting an abundant amount of time and money. Therefore, the rich and powerful will only continue to grow. This creates a considerable gap and imbalance of power hence creating more inequalities.

20. As we see the wealth gap separating, there is another prominent factor that will lead to this increased amount of inequalities. As new and improved technology begins to surpass the intelligence of many humans, it has been slowly taking over many jobs. AI is a much cheaper labor force; therefore, if there is a job that it is capable of handling, business owners prefer to use them over humans. The reason why Artificial Intelligence provides cheaper workforces simply put is because they are machines. They are able to constantly work without the need to rest, and they can continue to do so without pay. Some may argue that the cost of making artificial intelligence overtakes the cost of just paying employees. However if you break it down, the long term result is that you will be paying your employees more, and the amount of work done would not be as great. We will see many people lose their jobs, while business owners are getting more prosperous by saving money on the labor force. It is possible that this may lead to the decrease of the prices of products, but this shows how much power business owners hold. They are able to fluctuate the prices of products to whatever they desire, and consumers would have to find a way to accommodate their needs. Many may say that technology growth can provide jobs, but that is not looking at it from a bigger perspective. Workers will indeed earn money through their regular jobs. However, it is not comparable to those who are of higher status. People at the top of the companies will earn money much more exponentially. Therefore, if prices are inflated, they will be able to afford their lifestyles while regular workers will be struggling to make ends meet. This is a huge way that

technological growth can increase inequalities. If humans don't find a way to harness them, inequalities among humans will only grow.

21. Technological growth, as we know, impacts not only individuals but also countries around the world. A recurring point is that only the rich can afford to have these technologies. Therefore, it is apparent that Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDC's) won't have the ability to produce their own. There could definitely be a possibility of there being people from the upper class in LEDCs. However that does not mean that they would contribute to the sustainability and advancement of their country. Technological development is an essential factor in increasing the growth rate of the economy. Many countries prioritize the advancement of technology companies for their benefit. Let's take the relationship between the United States and the Apple Company for example. When Apple was starting up and in their early stages, they received a lot of funding from the federal government. There is a reason why the United States invested in doing so. The Apple Company is said to contribute 350 million dollars to the US economy from the years 2018-2023. An LEDC will not truly prioritize spending their government spendings on starting up these companies; therefore, they wouldn't be capable of advancing as fast. This is a challenge that countries will face because if it's not dealt with properly, it will only increase the number of inequalities.

### **III. Future Priorities**

22. As technological changes affect all countries, countries should prioritize international cooperation when responding to challenges posed by technological change.
- a. Countries should collaborate to create multilevel and multi vector policies to prevent the creation of new inequalities within and between countries
  - b. Countries should share their experiences and solutions found when facing the effects of rapid technological changes.

23. Technology and innovation policies should be consistent with national priorities and developmental plans through the cooperation of ministries and public bodies in different fields of policy.
  - a. Gender-inclusive innovation policies should be created whether it be towards women participating in entrepreneurship or innovation.
24. Countries should prioritize preparing all students for future technological advancements in order to ensure that all citizens have basic technological skills. By doing so countries ensure that all citizens have the needed knowledge to utilize technology. Adding on, as there is a gender imbalance in the technology field countries should take measures to improve upon this imbalance.
25. Amidst all environmental problems it is vital for technological companies to ensure that their production methods are sustainable.
  - a. Focus efforts on developing renewable energy technologies to make them more affordable and accessible.

## IV. Further Reading

The following link analyzes the impact technology has on us in regards to the economy, employment, society, and military

<https://cs.stanford.edu/people/eroberts/cs181/projects/technology-dangers/issues.html>

The following link discusses the income and wealth inequalities that have arisen due to technological change based on the argument that although tech has advanced there is slow and unequal growth.



<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2019/06/03/harnessing-technology-for-more-robust-and-inclusive-growth-an-agenda-for-change/>

The following link proposes that technology can help and hurt inclusion.

<https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2019/10/04/guest-post-why-inclusion-matters-to-technology-and-technology-matters-to-inclusion/>

The following link talks about how technology can help reach the sustainable development goals

<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/09/technology-global-goals-sustainable-development-sdgs/>

The following link is about the Sustainable Development Goals and all of the different targets and indicators.

<https://indicators.report/targets/>

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