



**Statement by Minister for Science and Technology of Pakistan at the  
High-level roundtable on using science, technology and innovation to close the  
gap on Sustainable Development Goal 3 on good health and well-being  
24<sup>th</sup> Annual Session of the United Nations  
Commission on Science & Technology for Development (CSTD)  
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**Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is indeed a great privilege for me to join this high-level round table on a very relevant and contemporary theme.

The triad of science, technology and innovation is critical to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Their role in driving a sustainable and resilient recovery from the devastating impacts of COVID 19 pandemic is equally crucial, especially in the area of health.

The Secretary General's report underscores important policy considerations and recommendations to leverage STI in closing the gaps on health and well being. We hope the report receives the attention it deserves at the national, global and institutional levels.

**Excellencies,**

The SDGs represent an ambitious vision and an integrated global agenda including in the field of good health and well-being. The mutually reinforcing nature of the SDG vision and its means of implementation require scaled up financing and forging of meaningful partnerships among and between countries, academia, corporations and international organizations.

Pakistan has integrated the SDGs in its development plans, policies and programmes. Both science, technology, innovation and good health are being accorded priority attention within the budgetary and financial means available. Notwithstanding fiscal constraints, our Government has made investments, achieved progress and is resolved to further advance a robust health and STI agenda in Pakistan, including through international cooperation and partnerships.

## **Excellencies,**

Enhanced investments in STI and health, sectorally and in an integrated manner are indeed vital especially for developing countries. The score card in these areas has remained modest at global level. Enhancing fiscal and policy space for developing countries is essential to review this trend.

The COVID-19 pandemic has devastated economies and livelihoods across the globe with serious repercussions for developing countries in terms of reduced fiscal space and liquidity crunch. The pandemic has disrupted public health systems globally and threatened the already achieved health outcomes.

Even before the pandemic, only around one third of the global population was covered by essential health services. According to recent estimates, if current trend continues only 39 per cent of the global population will be covered by essential health services by 2030.

Enhanced and smart use of science, technology and innovation, accompanied by a robust global development financing framework, will therefore be essential to ensure good health and well being for everyone, everywhere.

Frontier technologies such as big data, Artificial Intelligence, machine learning, gene-editing, tele-medicine and medical robotics hold immense potential to shape the health-care landscape in the future. Yet, these technologies would require adequate regulations and oversight to mitigate the risks of exacerbating the existing digital divide, inequalities in health and well being.

The Commission on Science and Technology as the United Nations' focal point on science, technology and innovation can play a pivotal role in fostering international collaboration in ways that benefit all.

## **Excellencies,**

Our Government has used STI for key interventions and improvements in the health care services in Pakistan. We have deployed ICT tools to determine eligibility criteria for fully subsidized health insurance cards in Khyber Pukhtunkhwa province. This facility is now being expanded to other parts of the country.

In the wake of the pandemic, we established a technology-centered National Command and Operations Centre to coordinate federal, provincial and district level monitoring, information and data sharing and awareness purposes.

We mobilized and harnessed our research and development institutions to manufacture Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs), sanitizers, testing kits and ventilators. We are able to produce these materials in a short time at scale and competitive pricing.

We are also investing in Biomedical Research and Development and have recently established a Medical Devices and Development Centre at National University of Science and Technology with a cost of PKR. 331 million.

The Ministry of Science & Technology is leading national efforts to mobilize research organizations, universities and industries and creating conditions for these stakeholders to synergize and collaborate including in the area of health.

### **Excellencies,**

Going forward, I would propose the following to help expedite progress towards realization of SDG 3 targets through increased utilization of STI:

**First**, scaling up of financing for development including through greater international tax cooperation, debt relief and a more equitable international trading and investment regimes, especially for developing countries, as a means to improve fiscal space for investments in STI and health sector.

**Second**, enhanced international collaboration in scientific research, capacity building and technology transfer as well as sharing of scientific knowledge and best practices.

**Third**, ensuring equitable and affordable access to life saving medicines and vaccines to everyone, everywhere. This requires urgent removal of undue restrictions on intellectual property rights and early waiver of patents on COVID-19 patents to accelerate production of vaccines and medicines.

**Fourth**, increasing STI-related official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries. STI-related ODA to developing countries has stagnated over the last decade. In 2010, it was \$4.7 billion, compared with \$4.8 billion in 2017.

**Fifth**, promoting North–South, South–South and Triangular cooperation and partnerships on STI as well as its utilization to drive progress towards SDG 3 targets.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the utility of STI policy reviews conducted by UNCTAD Secretariat. These policy reviews are useful to strengthen technological and innovation capabilities in developing countries. We look forward to benefiting from this review as well.

**Thank you.**

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