UNECE contribution to the call for input by the President of the Economic and Social Council to the 2020 High Level Political Forum on the topic "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development" (updated, as of 8 April 2020)

For a general overview of the work on the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) on the Sustainable Development Goals, see http://www.unece.org/unece-and-the-sdgs/unece-and-the-sdgs.html

Below are more detailed assessments of critical gaps in attaining the 2030 Agenda and policy recommendations for accelerated action, as provided by the main subsidiary bodies of the Commission. The input covers the eight subprogrammes of ECE, namely environment; transport; statistics; economic cooperation and integration; sustainable energy; trade; forestry and timber; and housing, land management and population. Further information on the work of the respective bodies can be found under the links to the ECE website.

Comments received from ECE member States on this document following its submission to ECOSOC on 13 March 2020 are included in Annex I.

ECE subsidiary body	Critical gaps	Policy recommendations
Inland Transport Committee For more info on the ITCs work on the SDGs, see: http://www.unece.org/trans/transport-and-the-sustainable-development-goals.html	• The road safety crisis continues, despite global efforts, and 1.35 million people die every year on the world's roads. • Inland transport is linked with intensive use of fossil fuels and emission of air and noise pollution, as well as large emissions of greenhouse gases. The environmental impacts of transport, particularly on climate change and air quality, increase at an alarming rate the risks for the economy's ability to remain competitive, and the well-being and public health of societies. • Cross-border and transit transport over land in developing countries, in particular for landlocked developing countries, pose a major obstacle for their effective integration to global supply chains and markets. Formalities and	• <u>Support Digitalization of Inland Transport SDGs:</u> (i) Increased level of automation and autonomous vehicles: It is the moment to outline how transport and mobility will look like in 2030 and beyond and what type of conventions, regulations will be demanded. (Needed for accelerated implementation of SDGs: 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) (ii) scaling up the use of Intelligent Transport Systems across inland transport and in an internationally harmonized way: it is beyond doubt that well-selected ITS technologies can play a pivotal role in making progress towards achieving the transport-related Sustainable Development Goals, improving system efficiency, safety and environmental performance. (Needed for accelerated implementation of SDGs: 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) (iii) establish computerization of customs transit procedures and because it could significantly enhance speed and efficiency, cut red-tape and improve governance. (Needed for accelerated implementation of SDGs: 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) • <u>Regulatory support to shifting away from fossil fuels, toward sustainable energy sources</u> This includes the shift towards low-emission mobility and zero-emission vehicles, such as full electric cars and fuel cell vehicles. In line with policy developments, current vehicle legislation needs to be updated to include harmonized requirements for the performance of new powertrain technologies. (Needed for accelerated implementation of SDGs: 13, 14, 15)

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	procedures are lengthy and cumbersome due to the lack of adequate supporting policies, regulations and capacity-building systems in countries, as well as differences in domestic laws and standards between countries, thus increasing transport cost and decreasing competitiveness • Infrastructure gaps and gaps in raising funds for resilient infrastructure globally • Increased demand for mobility of people and goods globally has a steep cost to economies and communities around the world and underlines the urgency of action.	• <u>Scale up support for seamless connectivity and intermodal solutions</u> One, single mode of transport can rarely provide the journey solution for both freight and passenger movements. Increased importance needs to be given to actions that facilitate connectivity for passengers and efficient intermodal transport solutions for freight. This is particularly important in the changing technological and policy environment for the transport sector. (Needed for accelerated implementation of SDGs: 7, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) • <u>Scale up the development and application of analytical/policy tools</u> To help support government efforts worldwide in tackling the biggest challenges such as road safety and climate change on the basis of evidence-based policy analysis. (Needed for accelerated implementation of SDGs: 3, 7, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15) • Promote a globally-harmonized regulatory system for inland transport as the foundation for sustainable transport and mobility and for achieving the sustainable development goals and targets. • Obstacles ranging from access to financing, to equitable access, to innovation and technological solutions, to interoperability may delay or derail the effective use of otherwise ingenious technological advances. It is for this reason that international harmonization plays such an important role in shaping the future of mobility and the transport sector. This is also why emphasis must be placed on the key role of the national and international regulatory framework in transforming the inland transport sector to achieve sustainable mobility and implement the SDGs by improving the national and international governance for inland transport. • Call for urgent attention to inland transport as an enabler and accelerator in the successful implementation of the SDGs and support to the UN comprehensive platform for inland transport. • Promote accession by United Nations Member States to the United Nations legal instruments on inland transport administered by ECE and their participation in the formulation of new binding and/or non-binding legal instruments to address emerging challenges under the Sustainable Development Agenda. • Improve regulatory environment to promote automated/autonomous and connected vehicles and strengthen the platforms for digitalization, automated driving and intelligent transport systems of inland transport. • Improve sustainable interregional connectivity, especially through integrated intermodal connectivity and mobility, and through climate resilient transport infrastructure.

ECE subsidiary body	Critical gaps	Policy recommendations
Committee on Environmental Policy For more information on ECE's work on environmental matters, see http://www.unece.org/env/welcome.html http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environment-for-europe/efe-conferences/batumi-conference/environment-and-sdgs.html	• The 2030 Agenda (including its environmental goals) is not adequately mainstreamed into national planning instruments, policies, strategies and financial frameworks; • Many national environmental authorities face problems of limited human and financial capacity, limited awareness and expertise in non-environment authorities, low awareness on green economy and SDGs at the local level, institutional instability leading to delayed decisions, etc; • Private sector also faces challenges: dated installations, low access to green finance, human capacity problems among small and medium-size enterprises, low level of awareness, etc; • Lack of adequate data and research also contributes to the problems of decision-makers, adding to the difficulties in adjusting relevant policies to national circumstances.	• To enhance national implementation by mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda into national planning instruments, policies, strategies and financial frameworks and fully utilizing the potential of existing international cooperation platforms, tools, and instruments, including at the regional level to that same purpose. • To share national experience on using green economy instruments and approaches to the member States seeking optimal ways to facilitate the greening of their economies and achieve related SDGs. • To further tap the opportunities that the green economy approaches can bring, requiring practical steps in the introduction and enforcement of clear rules and regulations, the application of price signals discouraging environmental pollution and resource depletion, transparency, effective engagement of civil society and the private sector, and close cooperation between countries. • To maintain and strengthen international organizations' support to the cooperation with and between countries, providing guidance and advise on request according to the countries' priorities. • Fully utilize existing regional cooperation processes and platforms for facilitating sectoral policy dialogues and exchanging experience between the member States on successful application of measures and instruments towards achieving SDGs at the national level. • Use the Batumi Initiative on Green Economy (BIG-E) of the Environment for Europe process of the member States of the ECE region (http://www.unece.org/environmental-policy/environment-for-europe/initiatives/big-e.html) as an example of "aggregating" tools to accelerate actions in order to fulfill the vision and SDGs of the 2030 Agenda. • Further apply in the ECE region the successful methodology of the ECE Environmental Performance Review Programme (http://www.unece.org/env/epr.html) for supporting the achievement and monitoring of SDGs, and facilitate its application by interested Member States in other regions. • Achieve further progress in developing the Shared Environmental Information System (SEIS) to support regular national processes of environmental assessment, thereby enabling the monitoring of and reporting on the achievement of SDGs.

ECE subsidiary body	Critical gaps	Policy recommendations
Conference of European Statisticians For information on this body, see http://www.unece.org/stats/stats_h.html On the dashboard tracking regional progress on SDGs, see https://w3.unece.org/sdghub/ http://www.unece.org/info/media/presscurrent-press-h/statistics/2020/unece-launches-dashboard-to-track-regional-progress-on-sdgs/doc.html	• **Involvement of statistical offices** in strategic discussions on national data infrastructures, for example when formulating national data strategies, updating legislation on data access and use, setting up administrative registers and geospatial data holdings, etc. Official statistics has a lot of expertise to bring to those discussions concerning managing and handling data, ensuring data quality, impartiality, protecting privacy, etc. The capability of statistical offices to produce good quality data often depends on whether statistical needs are taken into account in national discussions on these issues. • **Access to data sources**, including new sources (such as big data, geospatial data) and more traditional ones, such as administrative records. There are legal, administrative and technical barriers to the use of data sources. The big data sources are often privately owned, not sustainable, follow different technical standards and are of variable quality. Administrative sources have the biggest potential for producing official statistics but their existence, quality, information content, format and access are a big concern, especially in developing countries. • **Capacity of statistical offices** to meet the increasing requirements for more timely, disaggregated and high-quality data, in an increasing number of areas, some of which are new to official statistics. Partnerships with other data producers are critical for meeting these needs. Requests for new statistics (including for SDGs) come in addition to the economic, social and environmental statistics produced on a	• Recognise the key role of national statistical offices as producers of independent, trustworthy and high quality data. Support their role as coordinators of national statistical systems to promote the use of common methodologies and standards and ensure comparability of data. • Step up the financial support for official statistics, especially for statistical capacity development. • Make use of the expertise of national statistical offices in developing national data strategies, setting up and maintaining administrative and geospatial data holdings. Statistical offices have a lot to offer on how to work with data: ensuring quality and impartiality, protecting privacy, cooperating with different data producers, etc. They are in a good position to become data stewards at national level. • Review legislation and administrative procedures concerning data access to enable their use for producing official statistics. This will increase availability and quality of data and reduce the burden on citizens and enterprises to provide data.

ECE subsidiary body	Critical gaps	Policy recommendations
	regular basis. This requires an increased human and technical capacity while the resources for official statistics are often shrinking. Despite all the attention to data and measurement, only 0.34% of the total development support is currently targeted to data and statistics (according to Paris21 2019 report). • **Leaving no-one behind** in data – providing disaggregated data on vulnerable groups in society. Disaggregation into all categories requested in the UN resolution and the groups that can be considered vulnerable in national context would result in an enormous amount of data that are extremely costly to produce. Often it is legally not allowed to collect data on sensitive issues, such as ethnicity, or religion. The need to ensure confidentiality may prohibit publication of data on vulnerable groups. Producing such data within official statistics with high quality comes with a very high price tag, while there are often questions about the quality and impartiality of data on vulnerable groups produced by civil society organizations or pressure groups. Partnerships with other data producers are critical in this respect. All countries are grappling with this problem but developing harmonized approaches at the international level is just in the beginning. • **Globalisation** – the economy and society are becoming more and more global and their environmental impacts do not stop at borders. International cooperation and support is needed for national statistical offices to produce statistics in these conditions: to be able to access and exchange data on multinational corporations, to	

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	approach global companies holding big data to get access for statistical purposes, to negotiate licences of software use for statistical purposes, etc.	
Committee on Innovation, Competitive-ness and Public-Private Partnerships For information on this body, see http://www.unece.org/ceci0.html	• Insufficent spending on science, technology, research and innovation, particularly in low income countries, due to a perceived lack of market demand for innovative products and services.	• Use public procurement for innovation (PPI) to boost demand for innovation in areas critical for sustainable development, and thereby crowd in private sector investment. • Use PPI to address grand societal challenges through innovative solutions with a transformative character on a large scale. • Use the UN system, for instance through the Technology Transfer Mechanism, to diffuse the innovative solutions thus generated, especially from more to less developed countries. • Create knowledge hubs on public procurement for innovation in areas critical for sustainable development at regional and global levels to collect and analyse policy experiences, identify good practices, disseminate them, and provide capacity building to national procurement agencies and policy makers • Through the Inter-Agency Task Team-on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development, develop a comprehensive, flexible policy framework for promoting and diffusing innovation for the SDGs. • Use the "People-first" approach to PPPs, a new generation of infrastructure, utility and social service projects done though PPP and creating "value for people" by putting people's interest at their core (https://www.uneceppp-icoe.org/people-first-ppps/). Governments should focus on those PPP projects that comply with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and use the People-first PPP outcomes on access and equity, replicability, stakeholder engagement, and economic, fiscal and environmental sustainability as a yard stick for compliance with the SDGs.
Steering Committee on Trade Capacity and Standards For information on Working Party 7 on	Lack of a comprehensive and integrated framework to address food waste. Food loss and waste does not only mean being unable to feed the many hungry or losing money and income, it also means maintaining a food production and distribution system where natural resources are used for food that is never	• Systematically measuring the food lost and wasted at key points of the fresh produce supply chain. • Devising impactful tools and measures in support of halving food loss and waste by 2030 (SDG 12.3), zero hunger (SDG 2), good health and well-being (SDG 3) and climate action (SDG 13).

ECE subsidiary body	Critical gaps	Policy recommendations
Agricultural Quality Standards, see http://www.unece.org/trade/agr/welcome.html	eaten while being responsible for 8% of the greenhouse gas emissions.	• Maintaining quality along the entirety of fresh fruit and vegetables supply chains, by fostering communication and cooperation among actors along the distribution chain to improve their logistics, handling and planning, both inside countries and across borders. • Using quality standards for the safe and transparent trade of food and agricultural produce to ensure that the consumers in rural and urban areas receive a constant supply of high-quality, healthy and nutritious food.
Committee on Sustainable Energy For more information on this body, see http://www.unece.org/energy.html	Critical gaps include: 1) ensuring access to affordable, quality energy services; 2) improving energy productivity and energy efficiency; 3) addressing the cross-cutting and multi-faceted challenges of the 2030 Agenda; 4) achieving carbon neutrality; 5) transforming the energy system to support sustainable development; and 6) ensuring a cost efficient just transition.	• Buildings are responsible for up to 40% of CO2 emissions by virtue of the energy services they require, and the processes used to produce their construction materials include significant embodied carbon. The greatest near-term opportunities to improve health and quality of life while addressing climate change lie in improving the performance of buildings. The technologies to meet the challenge exist today and UNECE's high performance buildings initiative has been conceived to realise the opportunities. • Methane is the second most important greenhouse gas, emitted from a wide range of sectors such as agriculture and there are important non-anthropogenic sources. Initiatives to increase the visibility of the methane challenge and dissemination and application of ECE's best practice guidance on methane management in the extractive industries for both monitoring and remediation would have near-term benefits of reducing emissions and improving the efficiency and safety of industrial processes. • Sustainable primary resource development and secondary resource recovery as well as generalisation of circular economy precepts are imperatives for meeting the resource requirements of a future, sustainable economic system. Global deployment of UNECE's sustainable resource management system would contribute to securing needed resources by aligning investment practices and portfolios with the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. • Innovation and technological improvements to interlink the electricity and gas systems and facilitate the production, transmission and storage of clean energy.

ECE subsidiary body	Critical gaps	Policy recommendations
Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry For more information on this body, see http://www.unece.org/forests/welcome.html	• Lack of consistent data to measure and report on targets 15.1 and 15.2 • Misuse and insufficient use of wood as a sustainable energy source and construction material	• Promoting the expanded use of trees and forests, their services, and their products, will advance the achievement of goals across the SDG framework. • The many challenges facing the forest sector cannot be solved in silos. Therefore, it is paramount to consider and integrate priorities of other sectors and engage in meaningful partnerships. • Strengthening statistical capacities to address information and data gaps related to sustainable forest management will further support sound management and policy decisions and serve to monitor and report on progress made to achieve the relevant SDGs. • Replacing carbon intensive, non-renewable materials with wood-based products, including in construction materials (wooden construction materials require between five and twenty-four times less energy than concrete and steel while directly contributing to carbon storage).
Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management For more information on this body, see https://www.unece.org/housing/committee.html	• There is a need to strengthen evidence-based housing and urban development policy at local and national level, as well as resilience and adaptive capacity to climate related hazards and natural disasters. • Governments must advance decent, adequate, affordable, energy-efficient and healthy housing for all in liveable cities and human settlements, and sustainable land management. Improving housing affordability is currently one of the most important policy challenges for countries and cities in the UNECE region. Over 100 million of people in the UNECE region spend more than 40% of their income for housing which leaves much less resources for other	• Local authorities are responsible for the implementation of major policies that are designed at national level, in particular on housing, urban development and land management. It is therefore recommended to establish and enhance communication/dialog with representatives of local level and share ideas with representatives of national authorities at an intergovernmental platform. • Improved measurement of the transition to smart and sustainable cities, e.g. via the ECE/ITU Key Performance Indicators for Smart Sustainable Cities (http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/hlm/Smart_Sustainable_Cities/Resources/UNECE_and_KPI4SSC_role.pdf) to enable better evidence-based policy-making especially establishing and meeting sustainable and smart city goals, therefore contributing to the realization of the 2030 Agenda at the local level.

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	needs; at least 10 million people are in waiting lists for social housing. • The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) must be enhanced in order to accelerate the transition to smart, sustainable cities.	
Working Group on Ageing	**Population ageing** is the major trend in the UNECE region; it requires economic and societal adjustment, ensuring intergenerational fairness and gender equality and building enabling environment for realizing the potential of older women and men (access to work, lifelong learning, social participation, healthy and independent living, etc.). Among the critical gaps are: • Lacking recognition of demographic change as a transformative trend with broad implications for sustainable development. • Only marginal recognition of the needs and contribution of older persons within 2030 Agenda.	• Support older people, where it is their expressed desire to remain in paid employment in later life, through actionable policy measures on age-friendly workplaces, flexible work patterns and lifelong learning noting the considerable contribution older people make to their employers and the positive health & well-being outcomes of satisfying this goal. • Ensure inclusivity and social sustainability of the green transition by combining investments in technological drivers with adequate support measures for displaced workers (among whom older workers represent a large share), including re-skilling and upskilling, also ensuring adequate wage, appropriate social protection and decent working conditions for newly created jobs. • Support people as they age by focusing on promoting healthy lifestyles throughout the life course, building healthy habits as we age and investing in community based, integrated models of care. • Address the inequality faced by women over the life course, noting the lower number of years of paid work, smaller life savings, longer life expectancy and considerable societal contribution through care giving. • Promote inter-generational solidarity and combat ageism through age/sensitive policy making processes that address demographic challenges on ageing whilst also ensuring older people are not being discriminated and/or excluded from society. • Implement comprehensive policies to address chronic diseases, and in particular dementia, promoting inclusive societies aiming to improve quality of lives of people with dementia and their caregivers. • Assure pension adequacy, pension system sustainability, gender equality and intergenerational equity i. Provide appropriate and accessible financial products that

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		meet the needs of older women and men, and promote adequate financial consumer protection and financial education, especially for the elderly. • Promote participation of older people to the development of sustainability strategies that include policies on ageing (nothing about them without them). • ***Enabling longer working lives*** – in support of economic growth and sustainability of social security systems for future generations (SDG 1, 5 and 10); ensuring that people remain skilled and competent across the life course (SDG 4); combatting ageism and not leaving older people behind in future of work and digitalization (SDG 4 and 8). • ***Ensuring ageing with dignity*** – priority for developing comprehensive long-term care systems that cluster SDG 1, 3, 5, 8, 10 – i.e. access to quality basic services, economic, physical, and psychological safety in later life, gender equality, access to decent work (i.e. care workers, including migrant care workers), recognition of unpaid work by women, social protection. • ***Ageing in sustainable and smart cities*** **–** focus on enabling and accessible environments that leave no one behind by fostering inclusion and participation, and independence into old age, regardless of intrinsic capacity – SDG 1, 3, 11.
United Nations Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/CEFACT) For more information on this body, see http://www.unece.org/cefact.html	There's a need to enhance smart connectivity in business and trade to reduce inequalities, empower small enterprises, Least-Developed Countries and women as well as support the circular economy.	Standardize business exchange and provide clear guidance on trade / trade facilitation processes to optimize the use of electronic data exchange and streamline the flow of information. UN/CEFACT has developed universal standards and guidance for global value chains directly supporting a rules-based, open and equitable multilateral trading system.

The Economic Commission of Europe stands ready to provide additional information, as needed.

ANNEX I

At an informal meeting in April 2020, the ECE Executive Committee considered this contribution to the HLPF. Member States provided the following comments and requested their transmission to ECOSOC.

UNITED STATES:
The United States notes that the SDGs are voluntary and 2030 is a country driven Agenda.
Mandating that specific regulations be put in place undercuts the principle that Member States pursue achievement of the SDGs according to their own policies and priorities.
"Mainstreaming the 2030 Agenda into national planning instruments, policies, strategies and financial frameworks" is inconsistent with the country-led approach written into the 2030 Agenda.

We agree with the following recommendation as it counters existing trends where custodial agencies are seeking more authority to gather their own data for analysis and shifts it explicitly back to national statistical offices which retain the mandate within the 2030 Agenda:

- "Recognise the key role of national statistical offices as producers of independent, trustworthy and high quality data. Support their role as coordinators of national statistical systems to promote the use of common methodologies and standards and ensure comparability of data."

Policy Recommendations on Timber, Forests:

The United States is pleased, in the third bullet, to see that ECE provides a good perspective that the top reason for strengthening data is to strengthen forest management, not just to report on SDGs.

- Strengthening statistical capacities to address information and data gaps related to sustainable forest management will further support sound management and policy decisions and serve to monitor and report on progress made to achieve the relevant SDGs.

The United States does not agree with the "critical gaps" identified.

- The statement, "lack of consistent data to measure and report on targets 15.1 and 15.2," is an overstatement and neglects decades of work by FAO on the Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) as well as more recent work on streamlining forest reporting and developing a global core set of indicators. **We would recommend instead**, "difficulties measuring some aspects of forests, including some indicators under targets 15.1 and 15.2."
- The statement, "Misuse and insufficient use of wood as a sustainable energy source and construction material," implies, as written, that there is a misuse of wood as a sustainable energy source and construction material. **We would suggest** not referring to the misuse of wood. It would make more sense to note poor forest management and insufficient use of wood.

Policy Recommendations on Inland Transport Committee:

Some of the below policy recommendations do not align with U.S. policy:

- Some of the SDGs listed as needing to be 'accelerated' in relation to particular policy recommendations seem to not necessarily apply, e.g., for increasing automated vehicles, SDGs listed include those on life below water, climate change, and health/well-being which do not seem relevant.
- Scale up ITS "…in an internationally harmonized way" does not align with U.S. policy.
- "Away from fossil fuels toward sustainable energy sources" is overly prescriptive and does not align with U.S. policy that such policies be market-driven and technology neutral.

THE EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS MEMBER STATES:

- The document could include an appropriate reference to the urgent need of accelerated climate action, including synergies with the joint implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement, in all the relevant sub-programmes.
- For the Inland Transport Committee, we would like to suggest adding "in the framework of UNECE – ITC" in the following passage:

• Promote, in the framework of UNECE-ITC, a globally-harmonized regulatory system for inland transport as the foundation for sustainable transport and mobility and for achieving the sustainable development goals and targets.

- We furthermore believe that the ITC recommendations attempting to address a growing gap between the developed and developing countries could be more specific. As such, we would like to propose an additional point, which provides more concrete details:

• Promote the adoption of UNECE regulations and GTRs, in particular the most recent series of amendments, with a view to ensure that the vehicles that are placed on the roads in developing countries in particular meet the highest passive safety, active safety, emission related and fuel economy standards over a vehicle life. This would bring the levels of protection of vehicles' occupants and pedestrians in developing countries much closer to those in the developed world. Moreover, the emission footprint would be significantly reduced and the air quality of developing countries considerably improved.

- For the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management, we would like to include an additional recommendation:

• reinforcing the cooperation among different levels of governments, including monitoring and reporting, to foster and accelerate the implementation of strategies for the achievement of the SDGs

- For the Committee on Forests and the Forest Industry, we would like to suggest adding "sustainably produced and managed" before "wood-based products", in the policy recommendation on "Replacing carbon intensive, non-renewable materials with wood-based products".
- For the Conference of European Statisticians we would like to draw attention to the Data Stewardship. The topic has only been discussed marginally in the European and international context.
- The Committee on Innovation, Competitiveness and PPP could specifically support the preparation of Science, Technology and Innovation Roadmaps for achieving SDGs (STI for SDG Roadmaps):

• Through the Inter-Agency Task Team-on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development, develop a comprehensive, flexible policy framework for promoting and diffusing innovation for the SDGs, also promoting the preparation of STI for SDGs Roadmaps