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Introduction

The General Assembly Second Committee and the Economic and Social Council will hold a joint meeting on 11 October 2019. The joint meeting will engage in an open, multi-disciplinary discussion on “The future of everything – sustainable development in the age of rapid technological change”. Over the recent years, with differentiated impacts on people and prosperity, it will address the role of multilateral institutions, particularly the United Nations, and should respond to scientific and technological progress. It will particularly focus on identifying the potential of technological change to achieve sustainable development. It will discuss the risks and benefits of technological advancements and focus on what policy actions are needed to ensure that no one is left behind in an age of rapid technological change.

Content

The future will no longer be what we once thought. It is widely acknowledged that the pace and breadth of technological change is intensifying. In the year 2019, when the Sustainable Development Goals embedded in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development are to be met, the world will have undergone a period of deep changes with regards to the design of many day-to-day human interactions. Already, examples of how technological innovation has changed our daily lives are omnipresent. In a very short time, smartphones have become indispensable parts of daily routines of billions of people, facilitating navigation, banking transactions, and social networking. New technologies have changed human behaviour and informal norms.

In industrial processes, ever more complex operations are being taken over by robotised plants, with human intervention confined to design, control, and quality analysis. The rapid growth in large datasets, as well as the capacity to store and analyse big data, is having a deep impact on our economies and societies at large. Ubiquitous computing, facilitated by advances in the Internet of Things, in combination with 1G, big data, and nanotech, among others, will be the key drivers for change. Emerging new frontiers, self-driving cars and service robots are no longer fiction. While

improved algorithms have spurred progress in artificial intelligence%the consequences of the latter for human interactions in all aspects of life have only started to be felt# We may truly be at the beginning of what has been referred to as the Fourth Industrial Revolution#

For the global workforce%there are negative and positive aspects to these profound changes underway in technology%while some of their effects are yet unknown# It has been estimated that over a billion jobs are automatable with the use of current technologies%and the emergence of 3D printing has the potential to disrupt and revolutionize existing production patterns# Innovation and technological advances will act as catalysts for the transformation of the global economy%and societies at large in the upcoming decades#

In other areas%technological innovation is continuing to help increase the productivity of arable land%offering solutions for climate-smart agriculture%as well as for agribased industrial development to foster food security# Progress in medical research to cure diseases and to design personalized treatments for patients is also promising#

In many of these areas%ethical questions arise%questioning how technological advancements which% if not addressed%risk to undermine existing societal norms# Similarly%the challenge of cybersecurity and the increasing use of drones reveal the need to shape new policies and regulations to provide frameworks for the transparent use of big data and artificial intelligence#

However%public response is lagging technological progress# Governments are widely seen as being behind the curve on many of these technological changes# :et%they are required to partner with industries%academia and civil society to ensure that technology%including artificial intelligence% develops in a transparent%ethical and responsible

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The joint meeting will take the form of a three-hour e, \$ert \$anel \$resentation and interacti(e discussion# Presenters will be drawn from Go(ernment%academia%the \$ri(ate sector%and ci(il society# The meeting will be chaired jointly by the President of the Council and the Chair of the Second Committee# It will be moderated by an e, \$eried and well&' nown e, \$ert journalist#

The joint meeting will be su\$\$orted by Office for ECOSOC Su\$\$ort and Coordination of . ESA#/eedbac' has been recei(ed from IT)% 5 IPO%) *CTA. and) *ESCO% as well as other . ESA . i(isions# <ey institutional and other sta'eholders in the areas of technology% inno(ation as well as trade and in(estment will be in(ited to \$ro(ide in\$\$uts for the substanti(e \$re\$aration of the meeting#

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19 September 201