COURSE ON KEY ISSUES ON THE INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AGENDA

Short courses for Permanent Missions in Geneva
Organised by the Division on Technology and Logistics-Knowledge Development Branch
Policy Capacity Building Section / P166 courses

Frontier Technologies: Addressing widening inequalities and Implementing STI policies for leaving no one behind

Monday, 8 November 2021
Delivered by the Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD

PROGRAMME

Geneva, Palais des Nations	**Room XXIV**
10:00 - 10:15	Welcome address, Ms. Shamika N. Sirimanne, Director, Division on Technology and Logistics Short course will be moderated by Ms. Randa Jamal, Economic Affairs Officer / OIC, Policy Capacity Building Section
10:15 - 11:15	**Session 1** This session will provide an overview on recent development in frontier technologies, including artificial intelligence, robotics and gene editing, and the potential they have in making development sustainable. However, they also raise concerns regarding the increasing disparities between the haves and have-nots in terms of technology and the widening gap. Therefore, this session will address challenging and pertinent questions; such as, the impact of frontier technologies on inequalities and how Governments can minimize risks and maximize opportunities. Presented by Mr. Clovis Freire, Economic Affairs Officer, Science, Technology and ICT Branch, Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD Q&A
11:15 – 12:00	**Session 2** This session will build on the previous one and focus on the current policy approaches of frontier technologies. If channeled in certain directions, will the existing inequalities widen or create new opportunities? Additionally, the session will shed light on the status of the readiness of countries to use, adopt and adapt frontier technologies, in addition to examples of strategies and policies for harnessing frontier technologies leaving no one behind. In this regard, the role of international cooperation will be addressed. Presented by Mr. Clovis Freire, Economic Affairs Officer, Science, Technology and ICT Branch, Division on Technology and Logistics, UNCTAD Q&A

Frontier Technologies: Addressing widening inequalities and Implementing STI policies for leaving no one behind

Recent developments in frontier technologies, including in artificial intelligence (AI), robotics and gene editing, have shown tremendous potential for making development sustainable, but they also have raised fears of increasing disparities between the technology-haves and have-nots. Crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic lays bare these and other gaps. Rapid advances can have serious downsides if they outpace the ability of societies to adapt. There are fears, for example, that jobs are disappearing as more economic activity is automated. The implications could be serious for developing countries – if poor communities and countries are either overwhelmed or simply left behind. For example, the great divides between countries that we see today started with the onset of the first industrial revolution. Since then, every spurt of progress was associated with sharper inequality between countries. What is the impact of frontier technologies on inequalities? How can governments minimize risks and maximize opportunities? And how can international cooperation help? The answer to these questions is critical for the achievement of the SDGs.

The course aims to examine how frontier technologies could widen existing inequalities and create new ones, focusing on low and middle-income developing countries and least developed countries, as well as on the most vulnerable segments of societies. At the end of the course, delegates will have a higher awareness of 1) the relationship between technological change and inequalities, 2) the status of key frontier technologies such as AI, robots, gene-editing and blockchain, 3) the readiness of countries to use, adopt and adapt frontier technologies, 3) major concerns and key challenges for developing countries, 4) examples of strategies and policies for harnessing frontier technologies leaving no one behind, and 5) the role of international cooperation.