STI Event Concept Note: Roundtable on Generative AI for the SDGs: Friend or Foe, Hope or Hype?

Co-hosts: the ITU, the Broadband Commission for Sustainable Development, the Global Partnerships Forum, and the Permanent Mission of Romania to the United Nations

Format/Venue/Time: In person side event inside UN Headquarters: 1:15 - 2:30 PM (EST, New York time) Thursday 4 May 2023, Conference Room 9

Moderators:
- **Amir Dossal,** Founder and President of Global Partnerships Forum
- **Sinead Bovell,** Founder of WAYE

Panelists:
- **Ursula Wynhoven,** ITU Representative to the UN
- **Ambassador Cornel Feruţă**, Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations
- **Guilherme Canela Godoi,** UNESCO, Chief of Section, Freedom of Expression and Safety of Journalists
- **Robert Opp,** UNDP, Chief Digital Officer
- **Amira Dhalla,** Consumer Reports, Director of Impact Partnerships and Programs
- **Rami Amin,** World Bank, Project Lead, Technology Policy, Strategy, and Finance
- **Dan Altman**, Google, Lead, Technology and Society
- **Cass Matthews**, Microsoft, Office of Responsible AI
- *Additional member states TBC*

Background:

Generative AI, a subfield of AI that can create novel content or ideas, such as images, music, and text, without human input, can be a powerful tool for advancing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It has the potential to inform new and creative solutions to complex problems like climate change, food insecurity, healthcare and education, but is also raising many ethical concerns. Progress in the understanding and implementation of generative AI tools will require multistakeholder efforts and collaborative decision-making to ensure a safe and inclusive digital future for all.

Objectives:

This roundtable will present a landscape overview of generative AI, including benefits and risks of its use and the current UN response to the rapidly evolving technology. In the first portion of our discussion, we will explore the potential use-cases of generative AI for accelerating progress on the SDGs, the inherent risks associated with its application, and what safeguards may be needed to protect users. In the second portion, we will shift the focus to dialogue regarding potential collaborations and partnerships for shaping future policies and frameworks that maximize the use and safety of generative AI. By engaging in this dialogue, we can work collaboratively towards establishing guidelines, regulations, and ethical standards that ensure responsible and beneficial use of generative AI technology.

The discussion will draw on the expertise and experience of the hosts, and will bring together panelists from member states, the private sector, civil society and international agencies to exchange ideas, share experiences, and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Format:

The session will be structured as a moderated panel discussion, the conference room will be set up in a roundtable format. Please note the session will be webcast live on UN Web TV. No press has been pre-invited to attend this event.

The questions the roundtable will address include:
1. How does generative AI work? What are the potential benefits and most promising applications of generative AI for the SDGs, and how can they be maximized?
2. What are the ethical considerations, potential risks and current limitations of generative AI and how are different organizations and entities addressing them?
3. How can we foster partnerships and collaboration between the private sector, government, civil society organizations, and UN agencies to ensure the responsible and ethical use of generative AI for sustainable development, and what role can each stakeholder play in this collaboration?