

## **Note on World SDG Forum Webinar on Technology and SDGs**

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) signal a concerted international commitment to a set of normative principles, motivated by an urgent need to end destitution, disease and degradation and deprivation sustainably. By ratifying the declaration, the global community has agreed to act, collectively and individually, to achieve economic, environmental, and social goals in an integrated manner. The SDGs build upon earlier work particularly the Millennium Declaration (UN 2000) and the earlier Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development (WSSD) which had emphasized international development and poverty alleviation, peace and security, human rights and environmental conservation as major objectives for the international community.

The achievement of SDGs has suffered a setback due to the cumulative global impact of Covid and Conflict in Ukraine. The “polycrisis” is now abating or at least metastasizing and the economic growth globally is picking up – with India, US and western Europe rebounding significantly. Accelerating progress toward the 2030 targets – and beyond - requires harnessing technological advancements for grassroots communities, enterprises and households at the bottom of the pyramid. The Antyodaya philosophy enshrined in the Chitrakoot Declaration is more relevant now than ever before.

Under its webinar series of the World SDG Forum, DRI along with its partners is hosting a conversation on Technology and SDGs.

This webinar would share experiences regarding the use of technological advances and innovation to accelerate progress that arise when the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is translated into an action agenda by member countries and SDG interventions across the globe.

SDGs offer not only a greater sense of urgency and scope for convergence but also a fresh set of ideas and opportunities to tackle 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges, technological innovations, including innovation in data use and visualisation for action.

Technological innovation of course will contribute to greater efficiency in operations – whether in agriculture, forestry, wetland conservation, healthcare, school education, income & employment generation, justice and human rights. However, the relationship is predicated on universal accessibility and utility of the technological innovations.

Technology can enable but the lack of access to it can disable the poor and disadvantaged groups and people living in India's remote locations. If the digital divide has to be bridged, the SDG credo of "No One Left Behind" must be the objective of all stakeholders – government, private sector, civil society, scientific & research institutions and of course the tech leaders. Technology is of course a double edged sword – AI can and will displace existing jobs and nanotech can provide people with ready access to sex selection and worsen the sex ratio. While one cannot be a Luddite and resist the insertion of disruptive innovation in homes, workplaces and public spaces, it is important to ensure a focus on the grassroots.

For this to happen issues aligned to SDGs – in education, healthcare, rural development, slum upgradation, grievance redressal and community monitoring of basic services need to be addressed with a technology lens, for the world to successfully accelerate its progress towards achieving the SDGs.

The webinar would discuss the potential for leveraging technology trends (Promise)– including the new world of work fashioned by AI/Machine Learning, to strengthen implementation mechanisms. The speakers and participants would reflect on the current state of play (Performance) and highlight opportunities, challenges and risks (Prospects). The webinar would focus on appropriate technology and grassroots initiatives that harness it. It would also look at the role of the private sector both as a provider of technological solutions and a user oriented towards sustainability and growth that is pro-nature, pro-women and pro-jobs.

The webinar would bring together keynote speakers and discussants from grassroots innovator, tech sector, multilateral organisations and youth leaders to not only share experiences and critiques but also identify a practical way forward to ensure that the race to

achieve SDGs in the aggregate does not leave the poorest folk behind. It is imperative that the digital divide between the few and the many is transformed into digital dividends for everyone.