

**The 8<sup>th</sup> session of the Expert Mechanism on the Right to Development**  
**Item 5 of the Provisional Agenda**  
**Implementation of the mandate and programme of work - Focused thematic discussion**  
Palais des Nations, Room XX, Geneva

**Access to Technology and the Right to Development**  
Monday 30 October 2023, 4:30 PM to 6:00 PM

**Concept Note**

**Presented by Bonny Ibhawoh**

**Introduction**

Access to technology is a critical component of the right to development. Ensuring that technology is accessible to all, fostering innovation, and addressing ethical concerns are essential steps toward realizing this right. In today's interconnected world, technology plays a pivotal role in economic growth, social progress, and the overall well-being of individuals and communities. By promoting inclusivity and international cooperation, we can harness the transformative power of technology to advance development goals and improve the lives of people around the world.

However, there remain deep inequalities and inequities within and between States in access to technology. Many individuals and communities, especially in low-income regions, face barriers such as lack of infrastructure, high costs, digital illiteracy, and language barriers, which limit their access to technology. Inequalities in access to technology are often exacerbated by socioeconomic factors, gender disparities, and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, geographic location or physical, intellectual or sensory impairments, among others.

Much remains to be done to address the digital divide, promote innovation, and ensure that technology benefits all. The right to development offers a framework for addressing these challenges. The right to development emphasizes that development is a universal right and that individuals and communities have the right to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy the benefits of sustainable development. Access to technology facilitates the enjoyment of these rights.

Access to technology is a fundamental enabler of development in the contemporary era, affecting various dimensions of human life. Bridging the digital divide and ensuring equal access to technology for all individuals and communities is, therefore, essential to realizing sustainable development goals and promoting a more equitable and inclusive society.

**Purpose**

- To identify the role of technology in operationalizing the right to development and fulfilling the 2030 Agenda promise to leave no one behind.
- To identify the limitations in technological innovation that pose obstacles to the right to development.

## **Guiding Questions**

1. How can access to technology enhance education and knowledge production aimed at empowering individuals, especially youth, to acquire new skills and adapt to changing labour markets?
2. How can enhanced access to technology be leveraged to address global challenges such as climate crisis and health care?
3. What policy measures must be implemented to address disparities, bridge the digital divide, and ensure inclusivity in access to technology?
4. How do we address ethical issues in technological innovation, such as Generative Artificial Intelligence, data privacy and algorithmic bias, to ensure the right to development?
5. Addressing the challenges of access to technology and the right to development requires international cooperation. How can States, international organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector collaborate to ensure access to technology?

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