Making the Fourth Industrial Revolution works for Africa

Background and Rationale
The Covid-19 pandemic has reached almost every country globally and has harmed the environment, society, and economy. However, the ongoing pandemic also represents an opportunity to accelerate collaborative solutions to international development issues, primarily through advanced technologies and digitalisation. Digitalisation, particularly, demonstrated to have considerable potential for increasing productivity and efficiency, but it also raises important challenges to social inclusion and accessibility. Currently, 88 economies (including those in most African countries) have little or no involvement in advanced innovation, be it as consumers or producers. In 2019, the number of technology hubs across the continent grew 40% to reach more than 600. However, the proportion of total manufacturing value-added from the medium and high-tech industry in Africa seldom surpasses 30 per cent. This side event will discuss how the 4IR could transform Africa’s economy, increase its productivity and enhance its global and regional trade, particularly in the context of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA).

Tentative Programme
The session will discuss the role of digitalisation for promoting Africa’s sustainable industrialisation. This panel will examine initiatives and different approaches for adopting digital technologies in Africa and pinpoint critical elements for developing and instrumentalising the Digital Transformation strategy for Africa (2020-2030) to advance the 4IR in the region within the framework of the AfCFTA.