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**IMPLEMENTATION OF AND PROGRESS MADE ON DECISIONS
TAKEN AT THE EIGHTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Note by the secretariat*

Executive summary

The present note has been prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2005/309 and the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on its eighth session (E/2005/31). It provides an account of the activities and work carried out during the inter-sessional period 2005–2006, particularly on those contained in ECOSOC resolution 2005/52 on science and technology for development.

* This document was submitted on the above-mentioned date as a result of late submission

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1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2005/52, entitled "Science and technology for development," requested the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), within its existing resources or through extra-budgetary resources, to undertake the following activities:

2. **(i) Facilitate the establishment of a network of centres of excellence in developing countries.** The objective of this network is to facilitate interaction, provide training and organize workshops for scientists and engineers from developing countries in state-of-the-art learning and research facilities.

3. Thanks to a grant of US\$648,000 from the Government of Italy, the secretariat set up a Steering Committee and launched a network of centres of excellence. The initial training hubs of the network would consist of science and technology (S&T) institutions and research centres in developing countries which are internationally recognized for their work and programmes. Centres of excellence would be drawn from a compendium of national S&T bodies, which has been prepared by the secretariat.

4. A consultant will be engaged to build the visibility of and raise funds for the network; establish contacts with national governments to solicit support and participation; identify potential outstanding S&T institutions in developing countries; and undertake outreach activities on behalf of the network and recommend measures to ensure the network's effectiveness and growth.

5. **(ii) Collect and compile case studies.** The objective is to showcase successful experiences and best practices in science, technology and innovation and demonstrate their positive impact on internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. The secretariat has to date compiled eleven successful national S&T experiences, including: in Asia, the Grameen phone project in Bangladesh, the brain drain to brain gain project in Pakistan, rapid composting technology and e-commerce for farmers in the Philippines and the Academy of Sciences of Malaysia. In South America, the Prodem project in Bolivia, the Voxiva – A health web portal in Peru, and the Fundación de Chile, with the biotechnology industry and Hepatitis B vaccine in Cuba. In Africa, case studies included clonal technology in Kenya, the innovative wireless e-services for fishermen in Senegal and cell phone technology against AIDS in Rwanda.

6. **(iii) Further develop its Internet connectivity benchmarking tool.** This undertaking involves updating the work already undertaken on the ICT Benchmarking Tool. Thanks to a grant from the Government of Austria, the secretariat broadened and deepened the coverage of the ICT benchmarking tool by adding new ICT development parameters and time-series data. The time-series facility would enable policymakers to track and monitor the changes and trends of ICT parameter values and indicators over specific periods of time.

7. **(iv) Continue providing its expertise and analytical skills to science, technology and innovative policy (STIP) reviews.**

STIP reviews are demand-driven projects aimed at assisting interested developing countries with information-based policy recommendations formulated to their specific needs and circumstances.

8. At the request of the Government of Angola, UNCTAD has prepared a project document and mobilized financial support from the Angolan Government and UNDP. Final arrangements to launch this project are currently being made among participating partners.

STIP reviews are prepared on the basis of desk and online research, fact-finding missions, discussions with decision- and policymakers, and consultations with wide range of stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as important development partners and NGOs. A STIP review includes an evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the country's science and technology-related policies and measures, as well as the opportunities and threats that could arise from within and outside its borders.

9. The STIP review of Angola is the latest in a series prepared or to be prepared by UNCTAD. The STIP review of the Islamic Republic of Iran was presented to the Commission at its eighth session. The STIP review of China will be launched once its funding is assured. STIP reviews of three African countries will be initiated between 2006 and 2008 under the MDG capacity-building project financed through the UN Development Account. Requests for STIP reviews have been received from the Governments of the Dominican Republic and Sierra Leone. The secretariat has begun preparation of a project document for each of these requests.

Science and technology and the Millennium Development Goals

10. At its 2005 substantive session, ECOSOC took note of the work conducted by the Commission at its eighth session on "Science and technology promotion, advice and application for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration." In its resolution 2005/52, ECOSOC recognized that science and technology were essential in the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals contained in the Millennium Declaration and that many developing countries will need to enhance their capacity to harness the benefits of technology.

11. Building on its work on the MDGs, the Commission decided at its eighth session to focus its 2005-2006 inter-sessional work on "Bridging the technology gap between and within nations." The inter-sessional work on this theme was consolidated at a three-day panel meeting in Rabat in late November 2005.

12. Around 30 experts, including Commission members and representatives from governments and non-governmental organizations took part in the discussions and ensuing debates. Also present were three resource persons representing the viewpoints of academia, governments and international organizations.

13. Stressing the importance of multi-stakeholder partnerships in narrowing the technology gap, the panel focused on investment and technology policies aimed at acquiring and improving on technological capabilities. It showcased experiences of countries that have been successful in building an indigenous human resources capacity that formed the backbone in their drive to modernize their technology base. A special segment of the panel meeting was devoted to a discussion of the digital divide.

14. The outcome of this panel meeting, as well as a comprehensive account of the Commission's work on the current substantive theme, is presented in the report of the Secretary-General under item 2 of the provisional agenda.

Other activities

15. **Working Group on Africa.** In its resolution 2005/52, ECOSOC endorsed the Commission's proposal at its eighth session to establish an informal working group to address science and technology issues in Africa. The principal function of the Working Group on Africa (WGA) is to advise the Commission on S&T issues of special interest to Africa, and promulgating the findings and recommendations of the Commission to national and regional S&T bodies in Africa. With its focus on African S&T issues, the WGA will advocate measures to close the gaps and strengthen existing weaknesses to enable S&T to contribute to social and economic development on the African continent.

16. To this end, the secretariat held consultations with a high-ranking S&T official from South Africa¹ to reinforce 'African-ownership' of the working group and ensure synergy with regional initiatives. Following these consultations, it was agreed that the CSTD/WGA would prepare a short concept note on strategies to build national capacities for acquiring and diffusing technologies, with a view to harnessing science and technology in the pursuit of national development goals and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The concept note would be presented to the UN Commission on Science and Technology at its ninth session in May 2006.

Meetings and Workshops

17. In 2005, the Secretariat organized high-level events and roundtables aimed at scaling up science and technology, increasing support and commitment among policymakers and raising the profile of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development. These included:

1. Ministerial Round Table on Science, Technology and Innovation to meet the MDGs, including the ICTs

18. The Ministerial round table was organized in New York in cooperation with the United Nations ICT Task Force, within the context of ECOSOC's high-level segment in 2005 on "Achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits: progress made, challenges and opportunities". The aim of the round table was to discuss the promotion of science and technology, including ICTs, to help developing countries achieve the MDGs.

2. High-level Round Table on Putting ICT to Work for the Millennium Development Goals and the UN Development Agenda

19. The round table, jointly organized by the secretariat, the United Nations ICT Task Force and the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships, was held in Tunis on 17 November in conjunction with the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The meeting was the second in a series of discussions on ICT for development issues and built on the results of a round table held in New York on 13 September on "Innovation and Investment: Scaling Science and Technology, especially ICT, to meet the Millennium

1. Mr. Dhesigen Naidoo, Deputy Director General, International Cooperation and Resources, Department of Science and Technology, Pretoria, South Africa

Development Goals". The high-level round table examined how ICT can be applied to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals and discussed ways to raise awareness of ICT as an enabler of development.

3. Round Table on Financing ICT through FDI

20. The round table on Financing ICT for Development was organized by the secretariat, in collaboration with the African Development Bank as a side event to the World Summit on the Information Society in Tunis on 15 November 2005. The objective of the event, which was attended by a number of Ministers of Information and Communication Technologies from Africa, was to contribute to the discussion on how to improve the proliferation of information and communication technologies in Africa. The main focus of the event was on the role of foreign direct investment (FDI) in building ICT infrastructure and capabilities, and how to stimulate the interest of potential investors to invest in the ICT industry in Africa.

Workshop on capacity building in ICT, Maseru, Lesotho

21. A workshop on capacity-building in ICT held in Maseru, Lesotho, in October 2005 provided training to 16 ICT engineers and technicians. The workshop was part of a partnership project entitled "Connect Africa", which was developed in partnership with the Centre for Information Technology of the State of Geneva.
