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**ROUND TABLE ON HARNESSING EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES
TO MEET THE DEVELOPMENT GOALS CONTAINED IN THE
MILLENNIUM DECLARATION**

14 June 2004 – Summary prepared by the UNCTAD secretariat

1. The Keynote speakers were H.E. Eduardo Campos, Minister of Science and Technology of Brazil; the Honourable Jeyaraj Fernandopulle, Minister of Trade, Commerce and Consumer Affairs of Sri Lanka; Dr. Derek Hanekom, Deputy Minister of Science and Technology of South Africa; Ambassador Walter Lichem, Director-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Austria; and Mr. Talal Abu-Ghazaleh, Vice-chairperson of the United Nations ICT Task Force. The Round Table was moderated by Professor Calestous Juma, Chair of the United Nations Millennium Project Task Force on Science, Technology and Innovation.
2. Speakers reaffirmed that the application of science and technology, building upon local knowledge, skills and materials, is central in facilitating the achievement of most MDGs, especially in such areas as combating poverty, improving the lives of women and combating diseases, and that most developing countries are unlikely to meet the MDGs without making science and technology top priorities on their development agenda.
3. Tackling poverty through applications of science and technology does not necessarily require more knowledge generation. More importantly, the international community needs to address the institutional gap between knowledge-generating institutions and international policy-making. One speaker pointed out that at the intergovernmental level, institutions for knowledge creation lack points of contacts within the United Nations system. There is no equivalent of, for example, a Global Compact for the scientific community that would allow it to be represented in the policy-making processes at the global level. This has led to the marginalization of science and technology on the international agenda. Speakers called for mechanisms such as the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to create networks and linkages to the political agenda and to bring scientific knowledge to inform international decision-making.
4. Speakers underscored the importance for developing countries of strengthening indigenous scientific and technological capabilities through increased investment in science education at all levels, and adapting public universities and research institutions to make them relevant to development. They also highlighted the important role of scientific research, technological

innovation, technology transfer and technical cooperation in the building of science and technology capabilities.

5. Science advice in most developing countries tends to be ad hoc and non-central to the decision-making process. It is therefore important to institutionalize such advice, including through the creation of science advisory bodies, to ensure that government makes decisions based on sound science and that science is used as a tool for development by anticipating and minimizing risks and capitalizing on opportunities.

6. Several speakers underlined the importance of effective harnessing of simple and mature technologies to serve development needs, while reiterating that promoting the development and application of new and emerging technologies, most notably biotechnology ICTs and nanotechnology, will both reduce the cost and increase the likelihood of attaining the MDGs.

7. On the issue of technology transfer, one speaker observed that whilst the WTO's TRIPS Agreement has clearly defined disciplines on intellectual property rights (IPRs), it contains only a goodwill statement which "encourages" developed countries to transfer technology, without a binding discipline. In this context, the relevant clause in the TRIPS Agreement should be operationalized to assist developing countries in their efforts to acquire technology.

8. Speakers also noted with concern the underinvestment in development-related research and development. More and more research is directed to making profits rather than solving the problems that are the bane of humanity; for example, 90 per cent of the world's diseases receives a mere 10 per cent of total R&D expenditure. Given the global inequality in income, truly sustainable development can only be ensured through democratic participation by all nations in science and technology governance and cannot be left to the highly idealized concept of the "market". Equitable health care can only come from new models of R&D in the field of health. The international community was called on to explore ways of conducting R&D that are not market-driven.

9. Speakers also shared national experiences in mobilizing science and technology for social and economic development. The recently drafted industrial and technology policy of Brazil focused on national systems of innovation, and also technology development, especially in such areas as materials, ICTs and nanotechnology, as effective tools for poverty alleviation. The Government of Sri Lanka has recently established an Information and Communication Technology Agency, whose mandate is to implement an "e-Sri Lanka Road Map", a comprehensive, nationwide ICT strategy. One key objective of this strategy is to ensure that networking is expanded to the rural areas of the country, and encourage the use of innovative technology solutions, such as solar-powered stations to connect small isolated communities. Recognizing that a strong human resource base is crucial in technology development, adaptation and diffusion, Sri Lanka has embarked on a programme to rapidly expand private and public sector ICT education.

10. The Government of South Africa has set up a comprehensive and ambitious programme with concrete targets for the provision of clean running water, basic sanitation and housing. In addition, it will invest more than \$15 billion in infrastructure over the next 10 years. Innovation, and the use of new technologies, in particular biotechnology, ICTs and advanced manufacturing, will play a vital role in the implementation of these plans. A government programme has also been set up to transform government poverty relief programmes into community-driven, economically viable and sustainable enterprises by transferring technologies to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). While striving to meet basic needs, the Government has also identified a number of areas where it has a competitive advantage for further development. In this respect, it aims to capitalize on its geographical advantage and turn Southern Africa into a region of excellence in space technology and astronomy. The Government is currently in the process of reviewing its policies to effect a shift from technology transfer to technology partnership, with the recognition that more attention should be directed to education, which will help build up human capacity not only in the adoption and mastery of technology, but also in innovation and technology development. South Africa is also planning to assess implementation of the recommendations related to science and technology that emerged from the Johannesburg Summit a few years ago. International organizations such as UNCTAD will be called on to participate in this exercise.