

Statement by Mr. Mukhisa Kituyi, Secretary-General of UNCTAD

# Seventeenth Session of the Commission on Science & Technology for Development

**Geneva**

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*[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]*

Excellencies,

Mr. Chairman, Andrew Reynolds,

Distinguished delegates,

Dear colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to all of you at the seventeenth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development today. I am delighted to acknowledge all Ministers and other high-level participants from various parts of the world, as well as the significant number of representatives from civil society and the private sector participating in the session this week. This demonstrates the importance you attach to this Commission and your commitment to strengthening cooperation in the area of science and technology for development.

I would also like to thank the Chairperson, Mr. Andrew Reynolds, and the CSTD Bureau for their leadership throughout this year, and particularly in the lead up to this Annual Session.

As the international community prepares to take stock of the progress made under the MDGs since 2000 and set the development agenda for post 2015, it is a good moment to reflect on what we have learnt and what is relevant for the future. In this context, the Commission's discussions and deliberations offer a critical opportunity to consider how to integrate issues of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) into the post-2015 development agenda. These reflections are important not only for the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review process, which this year is on the highly relevant issue<sup>1</sup> of meeting the MDGs, but also for discussions on the sustainable development goals that will take over from the MDGs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The transformative potential of science, technology and innovation in the path towards sustainable development cannot be over-emphasized. As long ago as 1963, the UN Conference on the Application of Science and Technology for the Benefit of Less Developed Countries highlighted the role of technology transfer in the process of 'leap-frogging' by developing countries. One of the earliest calls to shift the emphasis of debate towards developing countries' own innovation capabilities came in the 1970, with a report commissioned by the United Nations Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology to Development.

Since then, the UN system and agencies consistently have sought to facilitate science for development. This evolved into work on science and technology for development and now, STI for development. Furthermore in 1992, the General Assembly mandated this Commission to advise the General Assembly and ECOSOC on relevant science and technology issues through analysis and policy recommendations.

Now, as the UN lays the groundwork for decisions to be taken next year on the post-2015 framework, this Commission has a pivotal part to play in shaping the discourse on the role of STI in sustainable development in years to come.

The development role of science, technology and innovation is sweeping. When considering how these contribute to sustainable development, the focus is often on areas where scientific or technological progress addresses specific needs. Drugs that help to reduce child or maternal mortality rates; technology that improves access to clean water; and technology and innovation in favour of environmentally sustainable forms of energy are just a few examples. Alternatively, the spotlight can be on ways in which STI advances growth in certain industries or sectors.

But while these links are certainly true, STI plays a much more fundamental role in sustainable development. This is because when we speak about sustainable development, we are talking about development that is economically and socially transformative as well as being environmentally sustainable. This means creating the conditions for developing countries to realize the kind of "virtuous circles" of productive investment, rising incomes, poverty reduction and expanding markets that bring about lasting and inclusive socioeconomic development.

It is this ambitious development agenda that is needed to address the challenges we face post 2015. And STI is central to this agenda. As is pointed out in the UN Secretary-General's report to the Commission on this theme, the role of science, technology and innovation "is positive and critical at each and every stage of development". It contributes to tackling multidimensional poverty by helping to create jobs, deliver basic public services, improve access to knowledge and education and empower marginalized sections of society. As such, STI can make development more inclusive. Moreover, it supports environmental sustainability in multiple ways.

So, in our discussions here this week, I would like to encourage participants to think deeply about the multi-faceted development role of STI. A myriad of technological capacity issues will be relevant to these discussions, of course. Of particular relevance will be generating and financing cleaner technology, ensuring effective technology transfer and channeling technology to priority sectors to maximize its development impact on ground.

In preparation for these discussions, the Commission has conducted a review of its own work over the past decade in science, technology and innovation, as well as in information and communications technologies. The report of the UN Secretary-General therefore looks back on the Commission's past activities as well as ahead. It has a series of suggestions and recommendations on how best to integrate STI considerations not only in the post-2015 context, but up to 2030 and beyond.

I hope that the report and deliberations will be a good starting point to link the Commission's work to debates within the UN system. In this context, I would like to recognize and thank the UN Secretary-General's Special Advisor on post-2015 development planning, Ms. Amina Mohammed, for her commendable work and leadership. Today, we shall hear her views on STI and its role in reinforcing the progress made through the MDGs and contributing to a new post-2015 sustainable development framework.

As an umbrella platform of the ECOSOC, this Commission can help to ensure policy coherence among various agencies working on issues of science, technology and innovation in the elaboration of sustainable development goals. These agencies include ITU, UNCTAD, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFCCC, UNIDO, WIPO and WMO.

The need for coherence within the UN system, as well as an inclusive approach in establishing the post-2015 agenda, has been among the messages to come from the Geneva Dialogue Process, which we launched last November. This open, multi-stakeholder dialogue with relevant Geneva-based entities includes intergovernmental organizations, member States, civil society and the private sector, among others. The dialogue's objective is to address the role of trade and development in the post-2015 agenda, as an input to the processes in New York. UNCTAD has so far organized two sessions of Geneva dialogues, with a third planned for next month.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The seventeenth session of the Commission also marks an important step in the ten-year review on implementing the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society, known as WSIS+10. This review is to be held next year by the General Assembly, alongside the discussions on the post-2015 agenda. As part of the preparations, the

ECOSOC requested that this Commission collect inputs from all facilitators and stakeholders and organize a substantive discussion during this, its seventeenth Session.

Given the importance of building a development-oriented information society, I am pleased to note that an entire day will be devoted to this topic on Wednesday. Conducting a comprehensive ten-year review is important on two fronts. Firstly, in taking stock of progress on the WSIS outcomes, it allows us to assess the contribution of ICTs for development. Secondly, it can contribute significantly towards integrating ICT issues in the post-2015 development agenda.

In this context, I am delighted to note that the second priority theme of this year's Commission underscores the significance of ICTs for sustainable development<sup>2</sup>. The report of the UN Secretary-General on this theme presents a series of policy incentives that can be integrated into countries' national frameworks to help deploy ICTs for inclusive social and economic development model.

One example highlighted in the report is cloud computing. Its spread in developing countries could help to reduce costs dramatically and increase the potential for firms to innovate. UNCTAD's 2013 *Information Economy Report*, was centered on the 'Cloud Economy and developing countries'. It urged developing countries to waste no time in raising their awareness and understanding of the cloud's opportunities and risks so as to make informed policy decisions. Maximizing its value, however, depends on the availability of reliable, high-quality broadband infrastructure and steps to overcome challenges of data protection and data sovereignty.

Looking ahead, UNCTAD will continue to assist this Commission through its work on science, technology, and innovation. This includes collaborating with partners to leverage further development gains from STI. One such way involves the science, technology, and innovation policy reviews we conduct. So far, reviews have been completed for over a dozen countries, a number of these in collaboration with partners such as UNESCO, UNDP, ECLAC and the World Bank. We are currently in the process of reviews for two additional countries - Oman and Thailand - and a third one in the Asian region is in the pipeline. During this session we will hear the presentation of the policy review of Oman.

In our research work, the next edition of UNCTAD'S Technology and Innovation Report 2014 will be on Promoting Innovation Policies for Industrial Development. The Report argues that to harness technology and innovation for economic development, innovation policies must be clearly and coherently linked to the overall industrial development goals of countries.

I am confident that the contribution of all stakeholders to the Commission this week will assist in work of the ECOSOC. I wish you a very productive discussion.

Thank you.