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**IMPLEMENTATION OF AND PROGRESS MADE ON DECISIONS
TAKEN AT THE NINTH 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 2007/208 of 2 March 2007 and the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on its ninth session (E/2006/31). It provides an account of the activities and work carried out during the inter-sessional period 2006−2007, particularly on those contained in ECOSOC resolution ….. on "Science and Technology for Development" and 2006/46 on "Follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society and review of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development".

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[*] This document was submitted on the above-mentioned date as a result of processing delays.

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1.   Further to its substantive work at the ninth session, presented under agenda item 2 as a Report of the Secretary-General: Bridging the technology gap between and within nations,[1] the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) submitted for ECOSOC's consideration a draft resolution that stressed the need to bridge this gap and to assist developing countries in reaping the benefits of science and technology, including ICTs. In this draft resolution, the Council would invite the Commission to undertake the following activities:

        (a) Promote regional networks in appropriate technologies, as well as new and emerging technologies, such as ICTs, biotechnologies and nanotechnologies;

        (b) Explore, in collaboration with other partners, the feasibility of a global review of experiences in open access regimes, especially with regard to free and open source software and open academic and scientific journals;

        (c) Encourage UNCTAD, which serves as the Commission secretariat, to collaborate with ITU, UNESCO and others in tracking progress in ICT development and to showcase policies and strategies that have enabled countries to foster ICT development;

        (d) Urge the relevant bodies of the UN system to work together within an integrated framework in the context of UN-Biotech to help developing countries build productive capacity in biotechnology, particularly in key areas such as industry, health and agriculture, as well as in risk assessment and biosafety.

During its meeting on 15 December 2006, the Council approved a decision[2] to enlarge the Commission but decided to defer consideration of other matters, including those contained in the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (document E/2006/31). On ……., the Council adopted a resolution …..

Work on the substantive theme

2.   In line with ECOSOC decision 2005/308 whereby the Commission was to assume a biennial work programme, with the first year focussing on policy analyses and the second year on operational aspects and implementation, the Commission had at its ninth session decided to focus its 2006–2008 substantive theme on "Promoting the building of a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society." The theme was selected to enhance the Commission's contribution in advancing the implementation of the science- and technology-related commitments contained in the 2005 World Summit Outcome as well as in anticipation of ECOSOC resolution E/2006/46, which designates the Commission as the focal point to assist the Council in overseeing the system-wide follow-up to outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).

3.   Over 50 experts, including Commission members and representatives from Governments and non-governmental organizations, the private sector and academia, discussed and debated the substantive theme and follow-up to the Summit at a panel meeting organized at UNESCO in Paris from 6–8 November 2006. The meeting was jointly opened by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the Director-General of UNESCO. The

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[1] E/CN.16/2006/2.
[2] ECOSOC Decision 2006/267.

viewpoints of academia, Government, industry, NGOs and international organizations were provided by seven resource persons.

4. Drawing upon the examples of countries that have successfully built and consequently leveraged indigenous ICT capacity to become global players in software development and high-technology manufactures, the panel discussed strategies for enhancing technological learning and capability-building of ICT firms in developing countries. It also deliberated on the barriers and obstacles in ICT use and diffusion in developing countries, as well as other key factors that promote or hinder the process. The effectiveness of the multi-stakeholder approach, as well as the importance of public–private partnerships, was highlighted by the panel.

The role of CSTD in the follow-up to the outcomes of WSIS

5. The panel discussed the role of CSTD in the follow-up to WSIS, as called for in ECOSOC resolution 2006/46. It was pointed out that the current substantive theme of the Commission was in fact the global objective in the implementation of and follow-up to WSIS, and should therefore be taken as the overarching and cross-cutting vision for all activities related to WSIS follow-up.

6. The panel identified a number of challenges facing CSTD in the follow-up to WSIS, particularly access to full and direct information from within United Nations entities and specialized agencies as well as from other actors concerned with the implementation of the Summit outcomes.

7. The panel pointed out that the implementation of the WSIS outcome, through appropriate policies and strategies, might benefit from an exchange of national experiences and from the identification of common, global issues and factors. It was emphasized, however, that the role of the Commission in the WSIS follow-up was not to implement but rather to assess and review progress in the implementation and make recommendations thereon.

8. ECOSOC resolution 2006/46, in defining the Commission's mandate in the follow-up to the outcomes of WSIS, stipulates that the Commission, as the focal point in the system-wide follow-up shall (a) review and assess progress at the international and regional levels in the implementation of action lines, recommendations and commitments contained in the outcome documents of the Summit; (b) share best and effective practices and lessons learned, identifying obstacles and constraints as well as actions and initiatives to overcome these; and (c) promote dialogue and foster partnerships within the UN system as well as with Governments, the private sector and civil society, to promote the attainment of the Summit objectives.

9. The outcome of this panel meeting, as well as an account of the Commission's work on the current substantive theme, is presented in the report of the Secretary-General[3] under item 2 of the provisional agenda.

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[3] E/CN.16/2007/2: Report of the Secretary-General on promoting the building of a people-centred, development-oriented and inclusive information society.

Other provisions of ECOSOC resolution 2006/46

10.   At its substantive session of 2006, the Council reviewed the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. Thereupon, it decided to take the following measures to strengthen the Commission, with a view inter alia to enabling it to undertake its new mandate related to the WSIS follow-up while at the same time maintaining its traditional mandate on science and technology for development:

        (a) *Composition.* The Commission was to be strengthened in its substantive capacity and enhanced through effective and meaningful participation of member States in its work. Membership of the Commission was to be enlarged by the inclusion of ten new members. In its decision 2006/267 of 15 December 2006,[4] the Council allocated the new membership in line with the principle of geographical distribution, as follows: three for the group of African States, two for the Asian States, one for the Eastern European States, two for the Latin American and Caribbean States and two for Western European and Other States.

At its organizational session in February 2007, ECOSOC elected nine new members to the Commission: three African States (Burkina Faso, Equatorial Guinea, Sudan); two Asian States (Philippines, Sri Lanka); two Latin American and Caribbean States (Argentina, Chile); and two Western European and Other States (Finland, United States). The election of one member from the Eastern European States was postponed to a later date.[5]

        (b) *Working Methods*. Building on its decision 2005/308 on the methods of work of the Commission, the Council decided that the Commission would:

        (i)   Continue meeting annually for a period of five working days in Geneva, subject to a review after two years;

        (ii) Remain on biennial action cycles for its work;

        (iii) Develop its agenda and a multi-year work programme;

        (iv) Conduct its future sessions in the form of interactive dialogue; and

        (v)   In addition to its traditional working practices, continue exploring development-friendly and innovative uses of electronic media. It could draw upon existing online databases on best practices, partnership projects and initiatives, as well as other collaborative electronic platforms. This would allow all stakeholders to contribute to follow-up efforts, share information, learn from the experience of others and explore opportunities for partnerships.

11.   To this end, the Secretariat prepared a Note, which proposes a multi-year programme of the Commission,[6] for consideration at its tenth session. In preparation for the tenth session, the Secretariat collaborated closely with the Secretariat of the Global Alliance for ICT and Development (GAID) and other entities tasked with WSIS implementation with a view to providing a common platform for synergies to be built amongst the various stakeholders.

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[4] ECOSOC Decision 2006/267: Enlargement of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development
[5] ECOSOC/6245.
[6] E/2007.CN.16/CRP 2.

12.   With regard to working methods, the Council recommended that the Commission provide opportunities for Governments, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations and other international organizations to participate effectively in its work and contribute, within their areas of competence, to its deliberations. To this end, the Secretariat is in the process of establishing a trust fund, with support from the Government of Switzerland. One of the main purposes of this trust fund is to allow civil society representatives, especially those from least developed countries, to participate in the meetings of the CSTD.

        (c) *Multi-stakeholder approach*. While preserving its intergovernmental nature, the Commission was requested to adopt a multi-stakeholder approach, mobilizing and ensuring the meaningful and effective participation of all stakeholders, including civil society, business entities and development actors. In particular, the Council decided that:

    (i)   NGOS and civil societies which do not have consultative status with the Council but which received accreditation to the WSIS may participate, upon approval by the Council, in the next two meetings of the Commission;

    (ii) Business entities, particularly those accredited at the WSIS, may likewise participate in the work of the Commission, upon approval by the Council.

To this end, the Secretariat proposed, in consultation with the ECOSOC Secretariat, interim institutional arrangements for the participation of WSIS-accredited NGOs and civil society entities and WSIS-accredited business-sector entities in the work of the Commission, helping to ensure the meaningful and sustained engagement of non-governmental stakeholders in the WSIS follow-up process. These arrangements were approved by the Council on ….

        (d) *Secretariat support*. The Council requested the Secretary-General to ensure full secretariat support by UNCTAD for the Commission to enable it to fulfil its mandate.

To this end, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD has set up a Science and Technology Board, which is designed to improve coherence and strengthen UNCTAD's work on science and technology, including its contribution to the WSIS follow-up.

        (e) **Reporting.** In order to apprise the General Assembly on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the WSIS outcomes, the Council requested:

    (i)   The Secretary-General to include the implementation of the WSIS outcomes in his annual report to the Commission; and

    (ii) The Commission to submit to the Council, within its annual report, information on the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the WSIS outcomes at the regional and international levels.

The Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.16/2007/2) contains the substantive work of the Commission during the period 2006–2007, with a focus on progress towards implementation at regional and international levels.

Progress in ongoing activities

A. The Network of centres of excellences

13.   The objective of the 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 offered by these centres. The Network was launched in late 2005 and started operations in 2006, under the guidance of a Steering Committee and with funding from the Italian Government.

14.   To date, four training sessions have been undertaken: a three-month advanced laboratory training course at the Institute of Infectious Disease and Molecular Medicine (IIDMM) – University of Cape Town, South Africa with nine participants, and a two-month training course on malaria-related research at the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) – New Delhi in India for the first two of 20 participants. A two-week seminar on animal biotechnology was also held at Sokoine University of Agriculture – Morogoro, Tanzania for 19 participants, and another one on bioinformatics at the Agricultural Genetic Engineering Research Institute (AGERI) – Giza, Egypt for another group of 19 participants.

15.   All 49 scientists and engineers who participated in the programme were African nationals. In total, 19 African countries have participated in the Network's programme as of the end of February 2007. These were Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

16.   Other training and workshop activities are planned to take place in other locations, including in China, Kenya, Pakistan and Tunisia. The areas to be covered range from general training for junior scientists and an ICT Workshop for Africa to human health-related biotechnology, infectious disease, biotechnology and bioindustry, as well as molecular biology and bioassay techniques for drug discovery.

B. Science, technology and innovative policy (STIP) reviews

17.   STIP reviews are demand-driven projects aimed at assisting interested developing countries with information-based policy recommendations formulated to their specific needs and circumstances. They include 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. The reviews are based on information collected from desk and online research, on-site evaluation missions, discussions with decision- and policy-makers, and consultations with a wide spectrum of stakeholders from both public and private sectors as well as important development partners and NGOs. An important component of STIP reviews is the role of the national counterpart, usually the government agency charged with science and technology.

18.   The STIP Review of Angola is the latest of a series that UNCTAD is currently undertaking. Three other STIP reviews will be initiated in Africa. While an increasing number of countries have requested STIP reviews, priority at this time has been given to sub-Saharan African countries.

Other activities

19. **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 for Africa to address science and technology (S&T) issues for Africa. The Working Group on Africa (WGA) would have the primary functions of advising the Commission on S&T issues of special interest to Africa and of promulgating the findings and recommendations of the Commission to national and regional S&T bodies in Africa. Intrinsically African-driven, it would advocate measures to close the gaps in the continent's drive to harness S&T in its pursuit of social and economic development.

20. To this end, the Secretariat held consultations with officials from the Science and Technology Department of South Africa to establish "African-ownership" of the working group and to ensure synergy with regional initiatives. A special segment of the CSTD panel meeting, held in Paris in November 2006, was devoted to the establishment of this Working Group. In view of the wide range of diversity among African countries, it was agreed that (1) the WGA should articulate and complement other existing S&T initiatives in Africa and that guidance should be sought from the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST) regarding its role; (2) although it enjoyed informal status at the CSTD, WGA should assume formal status at the national level; (3) the South African representatives would initiate an electronic dialogue to formulate the terms of reference (TOR) to be presented at the tenth session of the Commission; (4) with African member countries covering their own participation expenses, South Africa would host a workshop before the tenth session to finalize the TOR; (5) the South Africa representative would coordinate the process, supported by the Representative of the African Group in the CSTD Bureau (currently Lesotho); and (6) the composition of the WGA would be inclusive and open-ended.

Meetings and workshops

21. In order to strengthen support and commitment among policy-makers for science and technology and raise the visibility of the work of the Commission, including the coordination of WSIS follow-up, the Commission, through its Secretariat, undertook the following activities, meetings and workshops:

(a) It participated in the Africa ICT for All Investment Forum, organized by the Tunisia Government, in collaboration with UNCTAD in Hammamet, Tunisia from 26 to 27 October 2006, timed to coincide with the first anniversary of the Second Phase of WSIS;

(b) It attended the UNESCO–AU Commissioner of Human Resources joint meeting on science and technology (Paris, 9 June 2006);

(c) It co-hosted the International Forum on the Globalization of R&D (Beijing, 15 to 19 December 2006);

(d) It attended the E-Science multi-stakeholders consultation meeting, organized by UNESCO and held in Beijing, China on 22 October 2006.

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