

STI for Post – 2015 Development Agenda

Hilal Al Hinai
Secretary General of The Research Council
Sultanate of Oman

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Thank you Mr Chairman,

Highnesses, excellences, honourable
delegates;

It gives me great pleasure to participate in
this platform for experience sharing on a
very important topic related to how can
Science, Technology and Innovation play a
driving role in meeting Development Goals.

It is a pleasure to share Oman's experience
towards the realization of its development
goals. I have structured this short

intervention around the three themes of this CSTD session, namely, taking stock from the past decades of action, the Post-2015 STI for Development Agenda and ICT for Inclusive Social and Economic Development.

On taking stock from the past, in 1970 Oman was latterly living in the Middle Ages with only three elementary schools very few people in the country could read and write. There were no hospitals or roads with poverty and ignorance and tribal wars causing an infant mortality rate of more than 70%. With limited financial and human resources, under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said, development in Oman focused on Education for All, boys and girls, young and old; on establishing peace, security and social harmony and on developing an open economy.

Since then, Oman has seen a robust economic and social development and it is internationally recognised that Oman has well invested its limited oil and gas revenues to build excellent infrastructure, institutions and state health-care system. However, with rapid growth, gaps have emerged in the quality of education; a lag in legislations that matches the state of current development, a large influx of unskilled expatriate work force and the rapid growth has created an up normal distribution of wealth and opportunities. Despite the rapid growth in the economy, a significant proportion of the youth did not have job opportunities and expressed their frustration along with the Arab Spring. The rapid reaction from the government in creating well-paid jobs have significantly contributed towards social harmony and rural development. On the STI front, significantly more investment was put in

R&D in the past decade to build capacity in areas of national interest.

Thus, for Post-2015, STI for Oman will mean Social and Technological Innovation. We have realised that significant social innovation is needed for effective utilization of technological innovation. For example, the agricultural sector in Oman is highly fragmented due to the inheritance system and thus social innovation in managing the sector is more critical for sustainable agriculture and food security than technological innovation. Similarly, on the energy front, energy conservation and waste reduction is more sustainable than the development of renewable energy resources. For us, and I presume for most developing countries, social and technological innovations are important elements for sustainable development.

On the theme of ICT for Inclusive Social and Economic Development, E-Governance

initiatives of the Sultanate has received international recognition. The Information Technology Authority was established in 2006 in order to efficiently deliver government services and also offers to empower citizens with required digital literacy, through the Community Knowledge Centres set up across the country. However, the cost of internet in the country is high, even when compared within the region and the internet speed is generally slow. This is a deterrent, particularly for academic institutions, to freely access and download information. To address this, several initiatives are taking place including the establishment of a government funded Broad Band Company, the establishment of Oman Research and Education Network (OMREN) and improvement initiatives from Service Providers. These improvements in infrastructure are combined with a large emphasis from the government on content

development in the form of e-government services and educational platforms.

Mr, Chairman

Honourable delegates,

At this stage I would like to bring to your kind attention that in this CSTD session, UNCTAD are going to present the outcome of Oman's STIP Review. This review will be an important input to the development of Oman's National Innovation Strategy currently under development by The Research Council and will form an important element in the National 2040 Development Plan.

In conclusion, the Sultanate of Oman appreciates and supports the efforts of the CSTD on developing a shared vision on the effective utilization of Science, Technology and Innovation for sustainable development.

Thank you