UNITED NATIONS COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD), eighteenth session
Geneva, 4-8 May 2015

Item 3: Ministerial roundtable on "Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: the rols of science, technology and innovation."

Introductory remarks by

Mr. Joakim Reiter
Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD

Monday, 4 May 2015

Commission on Science & Technology for Development
Eighteenth Session

Ministerial Roundtable on 'Managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: the role of science, technology and innovation',

Geneva, 4 May 2015

Remarks by Mr. Joakim Reiter, Deputy Secretary-General, UNCTAD

Excellencies,
Madam Chair,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

A scientist and a visionary of the digital era, Alain Kay, once said: *the best way to predict the future is to invent it*".

And this is precisely what we are doing in 2015.

We are defining the contours of the world we want by 2030. The finance for development conference, the SDG summit, WSIS + 10 and COP 21, they are all part of our efforts to build the foundations of the future we all want.

But we need to pave the roads to that future. And an important way of doing so is through science, technology and innovation.

The topic of this roundtable is timely and important (*'managing the transition from the Millennium Development Goals to the sustainable development goals: the role of science, technology and innovation'*).

I would like to take this opportunity to share with you three ideas that, in my view, are important to consider if Science, Technology and Innovation are to play an even bigger role in the post-2015 agenda.

Let me start with the **first one**: gaps in STI capacities.

As we make the transition from the MDGs to an even more ambitious set of development goals, we need to ensure all our means of implementation are used at their maximum capacity. Science, Technology and Innovation are essential in this context.

However, the expansion of STI and their ability to foster development are often constrained by weak STI capacities in developing countries There are glaring STI capacity gaps, especially in the least developed countries. This could range from inadequate human resources, a lack of research infrastructure, training facilities, to weak national innovation systems.

UNCTAD and the CSTD have previously highlighted the need to address these gaps, if STI is to foster inclusive development. It should therefore be a priority to strengthen the global partnerships and mobilize resources to mitigate such gaps.

Let me now turn to my **second point**: improving policy effectiveness.

The new and ambitious development agenda demands more resources. But its implementation will also require us to use available resources more efficiently and effectively. As a consequence, our policies will need to be more effective and more coherent.

To maximize effectiveness we need to ensure the implementation of evidence-based policies in all areas, including STI. And we also need to ensure the presence of feedback mechanisms that allow us to learn and correct the course if needed.

We also need greater coherence. Otherwise, resources can be wasted in policies that neutralize each other. For instance, promoting FDI in high tech and knowledge intensive sectors without a policy that fosters domestic technological capabilities can render FDI efforts expensive and ineffective.

I will turn to my **third and last point**: making the most of the big data revolution.

The exponential growth and availability of data, both structured and unstructured, represents an important opportunity in the post-2015 era. And big data may be as important to business – and society – as the Internet has become.

If used correctly, more data will allow us to make more accurate analyses of development problems. More accurate analyses, in turn, should lead to more

confident decision-making. And better decisions can mean greater efficiencies, and reduced risk.

The global STI community has an important role to play in this regard. And, if the potential of big data is to be fully utilized for the SDGs, we need to facilitate and promote cross-border transfer of data, whilst addressing legitimate concerns that this may give rise to.

Transiting from the MDGs to the SDGs may not be an easy task, but it is feasible. And the CSTD can helped to pave the way for Science, Technology and Innovation to play the role it should in the post-2015 development agenda.

I am confident that your deliberations today will provide valuable inputs to the ECOSOC high-level segment in July.

Thank you very much.