UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social
Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.16/2005/3
21 February 2005

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
FOR DEVELOPMENT
Eighth session
Geneva, 23−27 May 2005
Item 3 of the provisional agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF, AND PROGRESS MADE ON, DECISIONS TAKEN AT THE SEVENTH 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 2004/315 and the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on its seventh session (E/2004/31). It provides an account of the activities and work carried out during the inter-sessional period 2004−2005, particularly on those contained in ECOSOC resolution 2004/68 on science and technology for development.

1. The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2004/68, entitled "Science and technology for development: Promoting the application of science and technology to meet the development goals contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration", requested the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), within its existing resources and within its role in coordinating science and technology activities in the United system, to undertake the activities set out below.

2. **(i) Linkages with national science and technology bodies.** In order to promote networking, share national experiences, facilitate information flows and increase the impact of its work, the Commission was requested to forge links between itself and national science and technology bodies. In this regard, the secretariat has begun the process of establishing an international network of science and technology institutions, including national science and technology commissions and other stakeholders in development.

3. To this end, the secretariat has established a database of science and technology bodies, including public, academic and private institutions. At the time of the preparation of the present note, almost 400 entities had been identified, with a little over four fifths from developing countries. Of these, 40 per cent are within sub-Saharan Africa, 4 per cent in North Africa, 11 per cent in Latin America, 6 per cent in the Caribbean, 5 per cent in West Asia, 5 per cent in East Asia, 8% in South-East Asia and Oceania, and 5 per cent in South Asia. The remaining 16 per cent are located in Eastern Europe.

4. **(ii) Feasibility of establishing mechanisms for the ongoing review, evaluation and analysis of national strategies for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).** With a view to ensuring that science and technology play a central role, these mechanisms were to be established in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and other institutions dealing with the use of science, technology and innovation in achieving the MDGs, and to serve as a tool to monitor implementation and benchmark progress.

5. In this regard, it should be noted that an Inter-agency and Expert Group on the Millennium Development Goal Indicators has been set up by the United Nations Secretariat. The Group is responsible for data development and analysis for the assessment of trends in the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The group includes the United Nations Secretariat, a number of UN agencies, the IMF, the OECD and the World Bank, national experts from statistical offices, and representatives from other organizations concerned with the development of data for the MDGs at national and international levels, such as Paris 21 and the IDB.

6. This Group meets at least once a year to review methods, standards and available data for the agreed indicators, and reviews and analyses trends for each of the quantifiable goals and targets. The secretariat of the CSTD participated in last meeting of the group, held in Geneva in November 2004, and made a presentation on the work of the Commission in the promotion of science and technology to meet the MDGs.

7. **(iii) Possibility of establishing new initiatives involving important development partners, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).** These initiatives would be aimed at strengthening and enhancing South-South and North-South collaboration in the area of science and technology.

8. To this end, contacts have been established with the African Forum on Science and Technology for Development (AFSTD), which was established by NEPAD to promote the application of science and technology for economic growth and poverty reduction. Arrangements have been made for a joint NEPAD/UNCTAD background study on the integration and application of science and technology in national strategies and frameworks for achieving the MDGs in selected African countries. Specifically, the study would be aimed at identifying good practices in mainstreaming science and technology into regional and national MDG frameworks and processes for selected African countries; identifying and promoting specific policies to attain targets 17[1] and 18[2] of the MDGs; and building a high-level political constituency to espouse the integration of national ICT strategies into national and regional programmes for MDGs.

9. As a special segment of the second meeting of the African Council of Ministers of Science and Technology,[3] a round table will be organized to consider the NEPAD/UNCTAD background study, as well as country submissions and the final report of the UN MDGs Task Force on Science and Technology. Specific policies and activities for promoting science and technology as pillars of national and regional MDG programmes will then be identified for further action.

10. Together with the assessment framework and report of the ministerial round table, the NEPAD/UNCTAD study will be published and disseminated to African Governments, donors and UN agencies. A synthesis report will be submitted to the CSTD, the African Union (AU) Summit, the NEPAD Heads of State and Government Implementation Committee (HSGIC) and the MDGs+5 at the UN General Assembly in September 2005.

11. **(iv) Feasibility of preparing and producing an annual world technology for development report.** Such a report would include technology achievement indicators and benchmarks, a review of emerging technologies and related policies, as well as best practices and case studies on the application of science and technology to the achievement of the MDGs. The secretariat was not successful in mobilizing extrabudgetary funding to undertake such a project.

12. **(v) Interactive forum for success stories and lessons learned from national efforts to apply science and technology to serve the needs of development.** This interactive forum is being set up within the Science and Technology for Development Network[4] by the secretariat in collaboration with the Technical University of Vienna. An on-line communication platform will be developed, which will provide a "meeting place" for virtual thematic working groups. A database is also being built, which will allow users worldwide to submit directly case studies and policy documents.

13. **(vi) Close interaction with the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, the International Telecommunication Union and the regional commissions.** This interaction is aimed at assisting developing countries in the

[1] Target 17: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.

[2] Target 18: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies—especially information and communication technologies.

[3] The second meeting is scheduled for May 2005, with either Nairobi (Kenya) or Dakar (Senegal) as the venue.

[4] http://www.unctad.org/stdev.

implementation of national action plans to support the fulfilment of the goals indicated in the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS).[5] A second objective was to contribute to the preparation of the second phase of the Summit, to be held in Tunis in November 2005.

14. To this end, the secretariat, in collaboration with the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (UN ICT Task Force) and the International Telecommunication Union[6] (ITU), prepared a report entitled *the Digital Divide: ICT Development Indices 2004*. The report updates the 2003 ICT Development Indices[7] to benchmark ICT development and review trends in the digital divide. It also presents a summary of the policy options that countries can adopt to foster ICT development, and illustrates these by reviewing four country case studies that have successfully promoted growth in ICTs. Importantly, this report adds depth to its benchmarking analysis by describing examples of innovative grass-roots programmes in the field of ICTs in Africa. The aim is to provide concrete examples of how ICT policies are being enacted in practice and to give guidance as to how implementation might be improved. It represents part of the secretariat's contribution to the WSIS, to be held in Tunis in 2005.

15. It will be recalled that in 1998 the Commission published the *Knowledge Societies: Information Technology for Sustainable Development,*[8] which proved to have contributed immensely towards raising awareness of the importance of ICTs in an increasingly global society. The publication was timely in terms not only of the advent of a global knowledge society, but also of the Millennium Declaration. So pervasive has been the role of ICTs that there would be little hope of achieving the MDGs without significant upgrading of ICTs in developing countries. Consequently, the Commission decided to publish a sequel to this publication. The sequel, entitled *Evolving Knowledge Societies: A Practical Source Book for ICT Development Policies,* has been prepared in collaboration with the UN ICT Task Force. It seeks to provide a comprehensive practical assessment of the ICT development policies required for developing and for promoting ICT globally. It identifies policy recommendations essential for "leapfrogging" development stages and for evolving knowledge societies.

16. Additionally, at the time of the preparation of the present report, a high-level forum on the relevance of science, technology and innovation in the knowledge society was being planned to take place on 8 April 2005 in Trieste, Italy. It is being organized by UNCTAD under the patronage of the CSTD, in collaboration with the Trieste system of scientific institutions and the United Nations ICT Task Force. Participants in the forum will include prominent scientists and Nobel laureates as well as high-level policy makers, including heads of State and ministers of science and technology, who will address the question of how science and technology can be enhanced and harnessed to help countries narrow the

---

5 Text accessible at http://www.itu.int/wsis

6 The ITU provided to the secretariat ICT-related statistical data free of charge.

7 Information and Communication Technologies Development Indices. (United Nations publication, sales no. E.03.II.D.14), United Nations, New York and Geneva, 2003

8 *Knowledge Societies: Information Technology for Sustainable Development*, edited by Robin Mansell and Uta When for the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, published for and on behalf of the United Nations, Oxford University Press, 1998.

digital divide. The expected outcome of the Forum is a "Vision Statement" on the role of science, technology and innovation in the knowledge society, to be disseminated worldwide and presented at the forthcoming World Summit on the Information Society.

Science and technology and the Millennium Development Goals

17. At its 2004 substantive session, ECOSOC took note of the Commission's seventh session work on "Promoting the application of science and technology to meet the development goals contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration", and encouraged all stakeholders to consider the recommendations thereon as contained in the report of the Commission on its seventh session.[9]

18. In line with the Commission's decision to further its contribution to the universal achievement of the MDGs, work during the inter-sessional period 2004-2005 focused on the eighth session substantive theme "Science and technology promotion, advice and application for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration". To this end, a three-day panel meeting was held in Vienna in late October 2004.

19. About 40 experts, including Commission members and representatives from Governments and non-governmental organizations, took part in the discussion and ensuing debates. Also present were four resource persons representing the viewpoints of academia, government, and a major Bretton Woods institution. The outcome of this panel meeting, as well as a comprehensive account of the Commission's work on its substantive theme, including its main findings and recommendations, is presented in the report of the Secretary-General, presented under item 2 of the provisional agenda.

20. **Other activities.** The Commission has consistently selected timely substantive themes for its inter-sessional work programmes. Its more important themes since its inception include:

a) Information and communication technologies for sustainable development;
b) Science and technology partnerships and networking for national capacity-building;
c) National capacity-building in biotechnology;
d) Technology development and capacity-building for competitiveness in a digital society;
e) Promoting the application of science and technology to meet the Development Goals contained the Millennium Declaration.

21. With regard to the Commission's latest substantive work-(e) above- ECOSOC noted,[10] during its consideration at its high-level segment of the theme "Resources mobilization and enabling environment for poverty eradication in the context of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010," the contribution of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on this topic.

---

[9] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 11* (E/2004/31).
[10] ECOSOC decision 2004/314, at its 51st plenary meeting on 23 July 2004.

It further encouraged all stakeholders to consider the recommendations thereon contained in the report of the Commission on its seventh session.[11]

22. It will be recalled that at its fifth session in 2001, the Commission addressed the theme "National capacity-building on biotechnology". Subsequently, the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/58/200 urged the relevant bodies of the United Nations system engaged in biotechnology to work cooperatively to ensure that countries receive sound scientific information and practical advice to enable them to take advantage of these technologies as appropriate to promote economic growth and development.

23. In the same resolution, the General Assembly took note of the proposal of the Secretary-General for an integrated framework for biotechnology development within the United Nations system,[12] and requested him to further report on the status of coordination between the relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations system with a view to strengthening coordination of activities in the area of biotechnology, in particular in the promotion of biotechnology within the United Nations system.

24. To this end, an Interagency Cooperation Network on Biotechnology (IACNB) was set up at the occasion of the Global Biotechnology Forum, held in Concepcion, Chile, in March 2004. Participating UN bodies were to nominate focal points, who would interact virtually and meet, as and when necessary, in conjunction with international events on science and technology. The objectives of the Network were to encourage the elaboration of joint studies and reports, where feasible; strengthen the UN's advisory role on biotechnology in respect of its member States; improve the assessment of the impact of biotechnology, in particular in developing countries; consider the establishment of a common portal; and assist UNCTAD in the preparation of the report to the UN General Assembly as called for in resolution A/58/200. The first meeting of the IACNB took place in Geneva on 28 May 2004. It was attended by 15 representatives of 10 UN agencies/bodies. The secretariat requested relevant agencies in the United Nations system to provide information on their biotechnology-related activities, including collaborative programmes with other United Nations bodies, as well as to nominate a focal point to the IACNB. Such information was to be taken into account in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution A/58/200 on science and technology for development to the General Assembly at its 60th session.

25. **Participation and representation in other forums**. There has been a proactive attempt to improve the participation and visibility of the Commission at international and regional conferences and forums. To this end, the Commission participated actively in the first and second Preparatory Committee meetings of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society, and in a joint regional conference on the “Role of Agricultural Biotechnology in Food Safety”, held in Cairo in December 2004.[13] The objective of this

[11] *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2004, Supplement No. 11* (E/2004/31).
[12] A/58/76.
[13] The Conference was sponsored by the International Center for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA), and the Foreign Agricultural Service, United States Department of Agriculture, and hosted by the Egyptian Organization for Standardization and Quality Control (EOS) and Egypt’s Agricultural Genetic Engineering Research Institute (AGERI).

regional conference was to have an open dialogue on the multi-dimensions of agricultural biotechnology, particularly the use and role of this technology with respect to the environment, food safety, and trade and development. The Conference expressed its appreciation of the work of the CSTD on biotechnology during its fifth session

26. **Collaboration with other bodies.** On the occasion of UNCTAD XI, held in São Paolo, Brazil, in June 2004, the secretariat in collaboration with UNIDO organized a high-level "Round Table on Harnessing Emerging Technologies to meet the Development Goals contained in the Millennium Declaration", where the outcome of the seventh session of the CSTD was presented. Participants in the round table included a number of high-level policy makers, including ministers of science and technology. The secretariat also collaborated with UNIDO in the organization of the "Technology Fair of the Future."