

Report from the Inter-sessional Panel of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), on the 2013 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review
Lima, Peru, 7-9 January 2013

Summary

During the 2012-2013 Inter-sessional Panel of the Commission for Science and Technology for Development (CSTD), Lima, Peru, one of the sessions explored issues related to the ECOSOC 2013 Annual Ministerial Review, which will focus on the role of Science, Technology and Innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Inter-sessional Panel was hosted by the Government of Peru from the 7th to 9th of January 2013 and chaired by Ambassador Miguel Palomino De La Gala (Chair of the CSTD 2012-2013).

This session included presentations by UNDESA, ECLAC and UNCTAD, followed by discussions on key policy messages and recommendations to be delivered to ECOSOC, as well as regional challenges and priorities.

Key policy messages

The discussions in the Inter-sessional panel, including during

improvements in areas including urbanization, transport, energy, waste management and deforestation.

- f* Local and traditional knowledge that builds on cultural value is crucial for the development of science and technology policies that address local issues.
- f* Development of appropriate modern infrastructure is essential to realizing the benefits of STI. Financing is a key element in this regard. New, innovative business models are needed to capitalize on available opportunities. One initiative mentioned was the Little Rock Accord, signed by the Club De Madrid and the P80 Group Foundation, to link resources available through sovereign wealth, pension funds and other sources, to viable projects.
- f* Greater urgency should be attached to the challenges created by a growing middle class and the pursuit of unsustainable consumption and production patterns. In many developing countries, including in LAC, population growth may be a less urgent concern than the issue of increasing consumption.
- f* There is need to distinguish between high and low technology and their use and application to particular contexts.
- f* ICT and broadband access should be seen as empowering STI. Public-private partnerships should be established to enable progress in both realms.
- f* Strong policy and regulatory frameworks are needed and the development of a culture of innovation should be encouraged through education. National development strategies, including broadband and spectrum allocation policies, should be elaborated.
- f* Internet literacy and development of high quality local content play a critical role in penetration and use of broadband, in addition to the issue of infrastructure.
- f* In many developing countries, including LAC, the cost of mobile technology and broadband access is still high. As a result, broadband penetration remains relatively low. The use of options such as Universal Service Funds is often effective in overcoming these limitations.

I. Introduction

In July 2013, the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations will hold its seventh Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) at the UN European Headquarters in Geneva. The review will focus on the "role of science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals."

In preparation of the AMR, a session took place on 9 January 2013 within the CSTD 2012-2013 Intersessional Meeting with discussions about regional challenges and priorities, mainly, but not exclusively for LAC.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which is responsible for the substantive servicing of the CSTD, organized the session in collaboration with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

The session brought together delegates of CSTD member States and a diverse group of stakeholders from governments, the private sector, academia, NGOs and the United Nations system to discuss the role of STI for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The session provided an important opportunity for CSTD member countries to contribute to the AMR, and to exchange best practices and lessons learned.

II. Issues in Science, Technology and Innovation for Development

The CSTD selects at each of its annual sessions new priority themes to be reviewed during the following inter-sessional period. At its fifteenth session held in May 2012, CSTD delegates selected two substantive themes for the 2012-2013 intersessional period, namely, "Science, technology and innovation for sustainable cities and peri-urban communities", and "Internet broadband for an inclusive digital society". These priority themes were discussed at length in dedicated sessions of the 2012-2013 Intersessional meeting, with the participation of experts.

A. Science, technology and innovation for sustainable cities and peri-urban communities

Participants in the inter-sessional meeting discussed the challenges that cities face on their path towards sustainable development. Major challenges include unplanned urban growth and the need to prioritize the elaboration and implementation of effective strategies to improve urbanization processes. Issues regarding institutional

development of broadband access, including increased government commitment; improved regulatory frameworks promoting competition and investment; and coordinated demand strategies so that consumers can adopt and benefit from broadband access.

Participants saw broadband as a major tool for an inclusive world, reducing inequalities and improving access to healthcare and information. Despite its benefits, many countries suffer from the high cost of broadband. Therefore, there is a need to bridge the gap in access and affordability both at the regional and country levels.

C. WSIS follow-up, including preparation for the 16th session of the CSTD

Participants undertook a review of the implementation of the WSIS outcomes. It was emphasized that the SMS helps to maintain the multi-stakeholder nature of internet governance discussions. Participants reported on and assessed their own efforts towards WSIS implementation. They followed up on and shared their future plans to achieve the targets set in the WSIS+10 plan of action. It intended to provide WSIS stakeholders with both guidance and a vision for the way beyond 2015.

The WSIS Forum, launched in 2006 in follow up to the Tunis Agenda for the Information Society and organized by the ITU in collaboration with UNESCO, UNCTAD and UNDP, provides a mechanism to evaluate and reward stakeholders for their efforts on the implementation of WSIS outcomes. Reference was made to the report on "Measuring Information Society", which was published in 2012 and delivered two authoritative benchmarking tools to monitor information society developments worldwide:

- 1) The ICT Development Index (IDI) which ranks 155 countries' performance based on ICT infrastructure and uptake.
- 2) The ICT Price Basket (IPB), which

III. 2013 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Reviews (AMR)

In the session on the 2013 ECOSOC AMR, Mr. Vijaya Kumar, Chairman of the Industrial Technology Institute of Sri Lanka, and member of the CSTD, informed that STI can help to (i) raise life expectancy from 50 to 64 years; (ii) reduce infant mortality from 13% to 6%; (iii) improve access to safe water from 35% to 65%; (iv) raise the literacy rate from less than 50% to 70% and (v) improve living standards for billions of people. He mentioned that country competitiveness based solely on low labour costs would eventually be unsustainable and soon vanish. As such, an alternative paradigm of country development has been moving towards finding ways in which science and technology infrastructures and relevant policy initiatives could foster sustainable economic growth.

Mr. Kumar pointed out that poverty reduction strategies should focus more on rural and urban productivity, health, education, gender equality, water and sanitation, environmental sustainability, as well as STI. He noted that real development progress has not reached the most vulnerable, considering that the poorest children are still facing the slowest progress in improved nutrition and that opportunities for full and productive employment for women are still scarce. He mentioned that STI has more potential to contribute to the achievement of the MDGs. He also highlighted that the CSTD recommended target of 1% of GDP on R&D spending, but that only a few developing countries are able to do so with most giving low priority to investment in STI. He stated that this is not surprising due to the low human capacity in STI in developing countries and that these countries can have immediate returns to their investments. The main achievements in ICT are principally in mobile telephony, driven by the private sector and in the internet penetration rate which reached 21% in developing countries. In his view, the UN needs to focus its STI interventions on improving capacity to absorb technology, enhancing employment in the manufacturing industry and improving agricultural productivity of certain crops.

Mr. Mario Castillo, Project Coordinator, ECLAC, presented on "STI in Latin America and the Caribbean region." In his presentation he noted that the region has enjoyed nearly a decade of relatively high growth; inflation is under control in nearly all countries and, in general, stable economic conditions prevail. He highlighted that despite this improvement, the gap in STI between developed countries and LAC continues to be significant. Specifically, he emphasized the low levels of innovation in the region and the persistence of the productivity gap compared with developed countries. Mr. Castillo underlined that the current patterns of economic growth in LAC are not consistent with sustainable development. He argued that in the current context,

