

**Informal Summary  
2013 High Level Segment**

**Monday, 1 July 2013  
9.15-11.00 AM**

**Opening of the High-Level Segment (Revised version)**

At the opening of the 2013 High-level Segment of the Substantive Session of ECOSOC, **H.E. Mr. Néstor Osorio (Colombia), President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** noted that human endeavour and inquiry have made significant improvements in living standards in recent generations, but there are still over one billion people living in extreme poverty. Science, technology, innovation (STI) and culture could significantly benefit poverty eradication efforts, as well as each of the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. States have an important responsibility to create and foster an enabling environment for STI at the national level, and to use culture to make development initiatives and processes better attuned to local needs. He emphasised ECOSOC's role in encouraging this, especially through its engagement at the global and regional levels with advances in STI and culture, and their impact on the global development agenda.

Promoting STI and culture for development requires significant investment, which entails further innovation in the area of partnerships and resource mobilization for sustainable development. Public-private partnerships are a policy tool for transitioning to sustainable development, making knowledge and technology sharing essential ingredients to the future development agenda. These should involve scientific bodies, the private sector, civil society, philanthropy and local governments. ECOSOC's Partnerships and Youth forums are two examples of integrating these concepts into the Council's own work. The Council is also reaching out to the general public, and has attracted a social media reach of over 5 million people during its 2013 AMR preparations. Ambassador Osorio stressed that the world must use this time to define a global development agenda beyond 2015 with poverty eradication and sustainable development at its centre, while accelerating implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

**Mr. Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations**, said that innovation is at the heart of addressing the interlinked challenges of global development, including especially complex needs such as sustainable energy for all and youth unemployment. Science, technology and culture are necessary elements for any post-2015 development agenda. Whether in information, transportation, communications or lifesaving medicines, new technologies help countries leapfrog to new levels of sustainable development. And innovation is about more than high-tech products. Innovations across a range of sectors that are low-cost, low-tech and grassroots-based often prove to be equally or more effective. Many of these solutions are waiting to be scaled up. This requires the right incentives and ensuring that knowledge and information are shared in a collaborative, open and problem-solving manner. Young people deserve special attention and support.

The Secretary-General launched the United Nations 2013 MDG Report, which highlights a number of successes on key targets that have already been met, or are within close reach by 2015, and demonstrates that the combined efforts of governments, the international community, civil society and the private sector can make a profound difference in development cooperation. The report also outlines serious challenges, especially those related to environmental sustainability, the burden of preventable diseases on children and gender equality. Efforts should be intensified, particularly to tackle the disparities across regions and among different social groups.

Two important tasks now stand before the international community. First, with less than 1,000 days before the deadline to achieve the MDGs, progress should be accelerated. Second, the global agenda beyond 2015 must be crafted with poverty eradication and sustainable development at its core. In May, the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda produced a report that presented a fundamental formula: without ending poverty, prosperity cannot be built. Without building prosperity, environmental challenges cannot be tackled. And without environmental sustainability, poverty cannot be eradicated. A dynamic global discussion is in process, underpinned by contributions from civil society, the private sector, scientists and scholars, and the UN system itself. The challenge now is incorporating STI and culture-based solutions into development initiatives while crafting a post-2015 agenda that is ambitious, achievable and relevant to all.

**H.E. Mr. Vuk Jeremić (Serbia), President of the UN General Assembly**, began by noting the long-standing tradition of cooperation between the General Assembly and ECOSOC. The ever-increasing interdependence at the global level requires a renewed commitment by Member States to work together to face challenges to poverty eradication and sustainable development. The post-2015 agenda will only become a reality if concerted action is taken on sustainable development, with the requisite mechanisms in place for monitoring the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. A revitalized General Assembly and a reformed Economic and Social Council could lead the United Nations in setting the world on a more equitable, prosperous and environmentally sound path.

**H.E. Mr. Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss Confederation**, said that Switzerland was honoured to host the main session of ECOSOC every other year, expressing his hope that the Council would make the most of the opportunities for dialogue provided by this session. He emphasised the importance of human rights, recognising planetary limits, having a cohesive set of policies and acting on social injustice as of paramount concern to ECOSOC going forward with an eye on the 2015 deadline. In addition to setting up a dialogue with its citizens and a number of stakeholders to set priorities for the post-2015 development agenda, the country has also been active in negotiations on the open-ended working group on objectives, emphasizing the importance of the following principles: human rights, the protection of the environment, social justice, universality and policy cohesion. It is vital that issues such as migration are also taken into account. The objectives should be limited in number and understood by all. ECOSOC is a key forum for sustainable development and, as a result, Switzerland welcomes its role in shaping the post-2015 agenda. Of particular importance is the Council's previous experiences – with dialogue, information and knowledge exchange and monitoring – which could be useful in consideration of the post-2015 agenda.

### **Keynote Addresses**

**Ms. Irina Bokova, Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)**, said that the world is at a turning point and that the achievement of the MDGs and successful formulation of the post-2015 agenda were principal concerns of the UN system. In order to meet these objectives, it is necessary to encourage and tap into the “ultimate renewable energy”, that is, human ingenuity. This is why the 2013 AMR theme, with its focus on innovation, is so timely. The vision of Rio+20 is clear: social equity, environmental sustainability and inclusive economic development are a single agenda, not options to be weighed against each other. STI is essential for achieving that vision. Science capacity is vital, and South-South cooperation is actively being promoted under the auspices of UNESCO. It is important to remember that computers do not drive innovation; women and men do. This is why education is a fundamental part of the discussion during this session. In particular, more and better education in science and engineering is needed. Because social inclusion is good not only for individuals but also for the economy, culture has a major role to play as a catalyst for sustainable development.

**Mr. Hamadoun Touré, Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)**, said that in terms of global communications, the world is living through a thrilling period with seemingly limitless potential for problem-solving. Today we are on the brink of seeing as many mobile phones as there are people on the planet and this year, 2.7 billion people will be using the Internet. However, almost 70 per cent of people in the developing world will still be offline. Information and communication technologies are fundamental building blocks of social and economic progress, underlining the importance of bringing safe, secure, and affordable broadband access to all people, and not just the richest third of humanity. Affordable broadband access is part of a key enabling infrastructure for ensuring the successful realization of sustainable development. Information and communication technologies are redefining the objectives of development work, as well as how development objectives may be achieved. Delivering affordable access to these technologies to all will be a vital enabler and driver of development, especially in the post-2015 period.

**Professor Rolf-Dieter Heuer, Director-General at the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN)**, discussed the important, inextricable connection between science and culture and the means by which research is a driving force for innovation. All regions of the world need to step up support for research and innovation in order to ensure economic growth and sustainable development. Youth need to be attracted to science through exciting and motivating teaching and innovative research opportunities. In this respect, strengthening teaching capacities in all countries is crucial. Cooperation is therefore a necessity, and international scientific research provides successful modes. So is competition. He proposed that one should aspire for “cooptition”, i.e. cooperation and competition as mutually reinforcing the search for innovation. He noted that science is a universal language understood by all nations, and stressed the importance of including the scientific perspective in decision-making processes, independent of any unnecessary political influence.

**Mr. David Sengeh, Founder, Innovate Salone**, highlighted the need to include young people, especially those from Africa, in the global development conversation. They are central to building a sustainable future. He then recalled his experience in Sierra Leone and the situation of amputees, which inspired him to work on the design of comfortable and highly functional prosthetic sockets at the Media Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). His experience at MIT, where there was a focus on constant learning as well as the opportunity to pursue innovative ideas, led him to ask what he could do to enable young people to create change in their own communities. Innovate Salone is the result of this thinking, which could be described best as a high school geared to address innovation challenges; offer creative freedom and funding for developing prototypes; and create a network of innovators across Sierra Leone. Mr. Sengeh called on the Council to consider how to foster a culture of innovation and the skills to transform societies, propelling economic growth. In this regard, it is crucial to establish a safe and enabling environment which protects the value of young people’s ideas by promoting the rule of law and supporting ‘hands-on’ learning.

**Ms. Daphne Koller, Co-founder, Coursera** said that an experiment conducted at Stanford University led to the realization that quality education, which is physically available only to a small number of students worldwide, could be provided online to a far larger population at a very small cost. Many courses from universities around the world are now available online, and many top universities from the United States, Europe and Asia have joined the programme. The courses span a wide range of disciplines, including philosophy, science, music and art, and entrepreneurship, and are offered in multiple languages (French, Spanish, Italian, Chinese and Arabic). They do not consist of static material but are real courses provided and updated regularly and involving coursework assignments. Of particular relevance to the MDGs are courses offered in teacher training, which is one example of the potential impact of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs). The current users around the world who have enrolled in MOOCs attest to the potential for individuals from a very wide range of backgrounds to advance their education and professional careers.