Second Committee Special Event
Panel Discussion on

Science, Technology and Innovation for Development

Friday, 16 November
10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Concept Note

Background

The upcoming 2013 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) will address the theme "Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals," which is strongly related to the Second Committee's agenda sub-item on Science and technology for development. The special event of the Second Committee on "Science, technology and innovation for development" will therefore guide the Committee on the latest information in this area, as well as establish a link between the Second Committee and ECOSOC pertaining to the 2013 AMR.

In its resolution 66/288, the General Assembly endorsed the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development ("Rio+20"), entitled "The future we want". Rio+20 recognized the very important contribution of science and technology to sustainable development. It called for improving clean technology transfer and diffusion (paragraphs. 269, 270 and 273), research, development and demonstration and the science-policy interface (paragraphs. 274-276), capacity-building and stakeholder participation (paragraphs. 160, 217, 272 and 278) and the policy environment (paragraphs. 72 and 271).

In response to paragraph 273 of the outcome document, the Secretary-General has recently made recommendations to the Assembly for a technology facilitation mechanism that promotes the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies, based on options identified by all relevant UN entities. A recent report by the Secretary-General (A/67/348) provides an overview of proposals and outlines recommendations on the functions, format and working methods of a technology facilitation mechanism, as well as on a potential global way forward[1]. In particular, the report recommended the immediate constitution of an intergovernmental preparatory working group in order to work out institutional details, with a view to achieving an operational technology facilitation mechanism before the end of 2013.

In this regard, the least developed countries (LDCs) are severely challenged with respect to science, technology and innovation. In order to enhance their productive capacities, LDCs seek to acquire new technologies and build domestic innovation capacity, as well as promote research and development. LDCs also face the challenge of bridging the digital divide and technology gap in support of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

In the Istanbul Programme of Action, Member States recognized that LDCs deserve particular support to address their development challenges in technology and capacity-building. Countries agreed to joint actions to promote access of LDCs to knowledge, information,

[1] http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/67/348&Lang=E

technology and know-how, and to support their scientific and innovative capacity, including through the establishment of a Technology Bank. LDC Governments committed to actions, including building strategic partnerships with a broad range of actors, in order to support innovation; ensure that science and technology are mainstreamed into national development and sectoral policies; and strengthen institutions to support local, national and regional research and development. Development partners pledged actions to provide enhanced financial and technical support and concessional start-up finance for firms from LDCs that invest in new technologies.

Science, technology and innovation have an important role not only in fostering the achievement of the Internationally Agreed Development Goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, but also in shaping the post-2015 development agenda. There is a direct linkage between science and technology and social policies. For example, science and technology will shape the ways in which governments will provide education and health services in coming years. Therefore, strengthening capacity-building actions in this area is a prerequisite for the future development agenda.

The need to create economic growth that is environmentally and socially sustainable leads to global and interconnected challenges. Science, technology and innovation have a cross-cutting role to play in addressing these challenges and have a strong supporting role in advancing international objectives in global growth, environment, food security, health and a variety of other public policies, including disaster risk reduction. At the same time, including specific targets with respect to science, technology and innovation as part of broader public policy objectives could be an important consideration for the way forward.

Objectives

The objectives of this special event are to: (1) inform delegates of current thinking and analysis in relation to the role of science, technology and innovation in development; and (2) promote linkages between the deliberations of the Second Committee, the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the Economic and Social Council, with respect to the 2013 Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) theme “Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals.”

More broadly, the special event aims to inform delegations of and promote an exchange of ideas on science, technology and innovation in the context of the follow up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, and the discussions on the post-2015 international development agenda.

Participants

The meeting will take the form of a panel presentation that will inform Second Committee delegates on key issues related to science, technology and innovation for development in the context of the follow up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the Istanbul Programme of Action, as well as preparations for the post-2015 United Nations development agenda.

Moderator:

Ms. Shamshad Akhtar, Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Panellists:

Mr. Romain Murenzi, Executive Director, Third World Academy of Sciences

Mr. Nathan Hultman, Director of Environmental Policy Program, University of Maryland School of Public Policy

Mr. Eskil Ullberg, Senior Research Scholar and Visiting Assistant Professor, Interdisciplinary Center for Economic Science, George Mason University

Mr. Ping Li, Chief Executive Officer, International Federation of Multimedia Associations

Questions

With a view to advancing understanding on the relationship between science, technology innovation and development, some questions to consider during the panel discussion are:

1. In The Future We Want, the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Member States highlighted the importance of enhancing access to environmentally sound technologies.
    a. How could the international community build a more enabling environment for the development, adaptation, dissemination, and transfer of environmentally sound technologies, particularly for the South?
    b. Which are the best options for closing the technological gap between North and South?

2. The international community, while working to achieve the MDGs by 2015, has also engaged in discussions on a post-2015 development agenda and the elaboration of sustainable development goals (SDGs).
    a. How can science, technology and innovation be integrated into the social policy aspects of a post-2015 development framework and sustainable development goals?
    b. What are some possible measures and indicators of progress in science, technology and innovation? Can these be incorporated into any new internationally agreed development framework?

3. UN Member States have recognized the importance of strengthening national scientific and technological capacities. This could help particularly the Least Developed Countries to develop their own innovative solutions, scientific research and new, environmentally sound technologies.
    a. How could policymakers and the international community support collaboration among research institutions, universities, the private sector, governments, non-governmental organizations, and scientists in order to develop scientific, technological, and innovation capacity in LDCs?
    b. What is the role of foreign-direct investment, international trade, and international cooperation in fostering scientific, technological, and innovation capacities of developing countries, particularly LDCs?

4. The private sector has an important role in fostering science, technology and innovation.
    a. How could the private sector facilitate the exchange of technology, knowledge and experience between organizations, industries and service providers?
    b. How could the public and private sectors work together in order to foster science, technology and innovation?

Proposed Format

The chair will call the meeting to order. The session will consist of a discussion led by the moderator, with no formal statements or presentations. The moderator will address questions to the panellists to initiate and guide the discussion.

A lead discussant will be identified from among the panellists for each question. The moderator will present the first question and request the lead discussant to respond for 5-7 minutes, giving her/his perspectives on the issue. The remaining panellists will then be given 2-3 minutes to give additional perspectives. The moderator will give a brief (one-minute) summary, and then proceed to the next question.

After all the questions have been addressed by the panellists, the audience will then be invited to pose questions to the panellists. The moderator will be responsible for channelling questions and managing the interactive process. The moderator concludes the discussion by presenting a brief summary. The Chair will then close the meeting.