

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**H.E. MR. NESTOR OSORIO
PRESIDENT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

**2013 ECOSOC HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT
Opening remarks**

Geneva, 1 July 2013

H.E. Mr. Vuc Jeremic, President of the General Assembly,
H.E. Mr. Uli Maurer, President of the Swiss Federation,
Mr. Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I extend to all of you a warm welcome to the 2013 Economic and Social Council High-level Segment. I thank you for being here.

Your presence attests to your commitment to the issues before us this week and your dedication to advancing sustainable development.

Excellencies,

This year, the Annual Ministerial Review focuses on “*Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals*”.

We see clearly that science, technology and innovation – or STI – and culture hold a large potential both as tools and enablers for sustainable development.

The steadily increasing pace of technological innovation makes ours an era of a long profound change. Some of us in this room started our professional careers before the invention of personal computers. We did not have the Internet, e-mail, mobile telephones or even photocopying machines.

It is now difficult to remember how we functioned in those days. And for some of our younger colleagues, it is utterly beyond their imagination how we were ever able to communicate.

So many fields of human endeavour – medicine, energy, agriculture – have made significant, even drastic, improvements in just a few generations.

Yet, in the field of development, despite our progress, there are still over one billion people living in extreme poverty.

And tonight many – if not most – will go to bed hungry.

This raises the question: How can the world's intelligence, creativity and energy – the kind that brought us smart phones, digital imagery and the global positioning system – be fostered and harnessed to address today's major development challenges?

Science, technology, innovation and culture can significantly impact each of the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental. They present huge opportunities. But effectively channeling them for sustainable development also poses significant challenges.

STI are often associated with academic research or the work of the private sector. And culture often has an independent aura to it, strongly linked to a people's unique history, language and customs.

Yet Governments are also strongly linked to STI and culture. Member States and the international community must seize upon the opportunities that STI and culture provide. We must tap into the immense amount of creativity they represent, directing their potential to address sustainable development challenges and enhance development outcomes realizing the MDGs, as well as in shaping the post-2015 framework.

As Bill Gates once remarked “Governments will always play a huge part in solving big problems. They set public policy and are uniquely able to provide the resources to make sure solutions reach everyone who needs them. They also fund basic research, which is a crucial component of the innovation that improves life for everyone.”

Governments have an important responsibility to create and foster an enabling environment for science, technology, and innovation at the national level, and to creatively use culture to improve lives. Regional bodies and the international community have an equally important responsibility at their respective levels.

Promoting science, technology, innovation and culture for development requires significant investment. Such resources are necessary for essential infrastructure, education and capacity building, financing research and scaling up innovations. We must, therefore, be innovative in addressing the resource and other challenges of STI.

We must be equally innovative in harnessing the power of culture, as both an enabler and a driver, in virtually all sectors of sustainable development. A greater emphasis on cultural context within development policies and programmes would enable a more effective, inclusive and human-centered approach to development.

We must use the cultural context to render STI more inclusive. Successful STI strategies and policies require a continuous dialogue – a constructive interface – between scientists, policymakers and society. Partnerships, including with marginalized and vulnerable communities, such as indigenous peoples and women, should be enhanced to make STI accessible to all. These communities should be considered the final beneficiaries of innovation and main actors of change.

Public Private Partnerships are also a policy tool for transitioning to sustainable development. Strengthening multi-stakeholder collaboration and building partnerships for the creating and sharing knowledge, technology and innovation for sustainable development, involving scientific bodies, the private sector, civil society, philanthropy and local governments is imperative.

Excellencies,

While preparing for this year’s Annual Ministerial Review, each of the world’s regions offered their input as it related to their unique regional characteristics.

In Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, policymakers discussed how regional measures to facilitate the transfer of ideas can help build capacity and reduce current imbalances of innovation and development in the region.

In Bangkok, Thailand, participants recognized that STI systems geared towards renewable energy can go a long way in overcoming some of the technological and economic challenges associated with integrating Renewable Energy Technologies in existing delivery mechanisms for energy services.

In Amman, Jordan, we discussed the number of STI “islands of excellence” dispersed throughout the region that could initiate productive partnerships to address regional sustainability challenges.

In Geneva, Switzerland, trends and challenges were identified with regard to the role of innovation in creating dynamic and competitive economies in Europe.

In Lima, Peru, we discussed the key role of “Science and Technology for Development” in Latin America and the Caribbean.

The Council also hosted a month-long e-discussion dialogue, drawing the diverse views of development experts from over 50 countries.

This week four countries will give National Voluntary Presentations on their successes and challenges, focusing on STI and culture. I commend France, Nigeria, Peru and Vietnam for this endeavour.

At the global level, this week's deliberations, culminating with the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration, will put a spotlight on science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture – and related national and international policies – in promoting sustainable development and achieving the MDGs.

Mr. Secretary-General,

I wish to commend you for your ambitious initiatives and intensified focus in the areas of partnership, “*Sustainable energy for all*”, youth, and data for development. Each of these areas has a strong link to the use of STI and culture to advance development and inclusion. The Council supports and applauds your effort.

ECOSOC, for its part, is also sharpening its focus on several of these areas.

It was at this year's Partnerships Forum that the Council furthered its dialogue with the private sector and the philanthropic community, exploring partnerships to promote the use of STI and culture for development.

And it was through the ECOSOC Youth Forum, convened this past spring that the Council promoted inclusive dialogue with youth. The Forum addressed the important role STI and culture can play in resolving diverse pressing concerns for the youth, like gender equality, income generation, job creation and the youth's large capacity for technological innovation. It was inspiring heard the conviction and eagerness of young people to participate and make meaningful proposals on the UN's work.

During the Youth Forum, ECOSOC launched the Thunderclap online campaign called “*Innovate Your Future*”. The purpose of the campaign has been to build momentum online in the run-up to our ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review, linking young people to the focus of science, technology and innovation (STI) and culture.

I am pleased to announce today that we have attracted a social media reach of over 5 million people. As you can see on the screen, these people come from different horizons to inspire the world to use science, technology, culture and innovation to improve lives.

Excellencies,

The outcome of Rio+20 recognized the Council's key role in achieving a balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

To this end, the 2013 ECOSOC Integration Meeting, held in May, focused on two sectors - energy and agriculture - to explore their potential to provide the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

Using examples drawn from the two sectors, with science, technology and innovation as a cross-cutting dimension, the Integration Meeting showed us ways in

which integrated policy action can result in longer-term and more sustainable benefits in all areas of development.

Looking ahead, I welcome the outcomes of the process on the further review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council. The successful culmination of discussions on the High-Level Political Forum means an expansion of the responsibilities of the Council. We gladly embrace this.

These outcomes include joining a strengthened ECOSOC with the High-level Forum for conducting a common review of progress and gaps in sustainable development. I look forward to the improvements that initiative will bring.

Albert Einstein once said “When you're finished changing, you're finished.” ECOSOC must continue to adapt as the world around us changes. It is only through adaptation and review that we will succeed in addressing the tremendous challenges confronting the world.

But ECOSOC must not only adapt – it must also shape and contribute to change. This week’s thematic debate will focus on ECOSOC’s contribution to shaping the post-2015 development agenda and its follow up. Our focus on implementation of universal health coverage and on priorities for Africa and LDCs therefore could not be more timely.

We 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 MDGs.

ECOSOC has accumulated extensive experience in the substantive monitoring and review of the MDGs and in the integrated and coordinated follow up to the major global summits and conferences. It is in a unique position to contribute to these twin objectives.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of this High-level Segment could hardly be more timely.

I urge all of us to use this week to share our vision and strategic priorities, through open and frank exchanges.

Let us ensure that the messages emanating from our deliberations will impact the deliberations on the post-2015 development agenda.

Thank you.