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Economic and Social Council

Substantive session of 2013

High-level segment

Provisional summary record of the 14th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 1 July 2013, at 9.15 a.m.

President: Mr. Osorio.....(Colombia)

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The meeting was called to order at 9.30 a.m.

Opening of the session

The President declared open the substantive session of 2013.

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (E/2013/100, E/2013/L.7 and E/2013/L.8)

The provisional agenda, as contained in document E/2013/100, was adopted.

The President drew attention to the proposed programme of work for the substantive session of 2013 (E/2013/L.7) and the status of documentation for the session (E/2013/L.8). An updated status of documentation, E/2013/CRP.1, would be made available later in the day.

The proposed programme of work was adopted.

Requests from non-governmental organizations to be heard by the Economic and Social Council

The President drew attention to document E/2013/84 which contained requests from non-governmental organizations for hearings before the Economic and Social Council. At its resumed 2013 session, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations had decided to recommend that the organizations mentioned in document E/2011/84 should be heard during the high-level segment of the Council's 2013 substantive session. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the Committee's recommendation, as contained in document E/2011/84.

It was so decided.

Opening of the high-level segment

Statement by the President

The President said that more than one billion people still lived in extreme poverty in spite of rapid technological developments. Science, technology, innovation and culture could all contribute greatly to sustainable development but the international community and Member States must harness their creative potential. Governments had a key role to play by promoting conditions that supported science, technology and innovation and by using culture creatively to improve people's lives.

Enhanced international cooperation was required to build capacity in science, technology and innovation, particularly in developing countries, and to encourage know-how transfers, with the aim of eradicating poverty and laying the foundations for wealth creation in those countries. That required a considerable investment in infrastructure, education, capacity-building, research and development and thus innovative approaches to securing public and private funding were imperative. The power of culture to foster sustainable, targeted and inclusive development should be leveraged, while sustained dialogue between the scientific community and other stakeholders would be a key to development success. More needed to be done to help vulnerable social groups to benefit from scientific and technological innovation.

At the regional preparatory meetings for the Annual Ministerial Review participants had highlighted the importance of knowledge transfers; the role of science and technology in promoting development; the need for innovation to facilitate access to renewable energy; the potential for centres of excellence to contribute to sustainable development; and the role of innovation in creating dynamic economies.

The Economic and Social Council was paying increased attention to the impact of science, technology and innovation on development. It was focusing on youth and, through its “Thunderclap” campaign, had reached out to more than five million young people around the world. With a view to promoting a strategy for sustainable development beyond 2015, the Council had hosted a one-day integration meeting in May 2013 focusing on agriculture and energy in the context of the three dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental.

The conclusions resulting from discussion of General Assembly resolution 61/16 on strengthening the Council had been satisfactory. The Council needed not only to adapt to changing times but also to shape the post-2015 agenda. Eradication of poverty would remain a cornerstone of sustainable development strategies.

Address by the Secretary-General of the United Nations

The Secretary-General said that a successful development strategy must build on innovations that addressed local needs. Nearly 40 per cent of the world’s population still relied on traditional sources of energy that caused pollution, killing 2 million people a year. More than 75 million young people around the world were unemployed and global food production would need to rise by 70 per cent to meet food security requirements. Innovation had already produced results. Mobile phone applications had contributed to improved access to health care, education and banking services. In some contexts, however, low-cost and low-tech solutions proved more effective than cutting-edge scientific developments. Knowledge should be shared in a collaborative fashion.

Progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals must be accelerated, as the deadline for implementation was less than three years away, and demonstrable progress on the Millennium Development Goals would inspire subsequent action. The United Nations 2013 Millennium Development Goals report highlighted successes on key targets thus far. The proportion of people living in extreme poverty had been halved and more than 2.1 billion people had gained access to improved sources of drinking water. Important gains had been made in efforts to combat malaria and tuberculosis. Serious challenges remained, however, in such areas as the environment and infant mortality, and in terms of wide disparities in wealth between regions and different social groups. Ending poverty, increasing prosperity and promoting environmental sustainability were interdependent goals.

Address by the President of the General Assembly

The President of the General Assembly said that the greatest challenge for the adoption of Sustainable Development Goals for the post-2015 period would lie in establishing global mechanisms to monitor their implementation. A draft resolution that would be tabled before the General Assembly in July 2013 provided for a high-level political forum to replace the Commission on Sustainable Development and, under the auspices of the Council, to begin monitoring work in 2016. Adoption of the draft resolution would contribute to the Council’s review process.

The current session could provide valuable input for the special event to follow-up on efforts towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which was due to be held in September 2013 during the sixty-eighth session of the General Assembly. That event would probably be the last opportunity for world leaders to decide on the action needed to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. It would also allow States Members to establish a process for making the transition towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Address by the President of the Swiss Confederation

Mr. Maurer (President of the Swiss Confederation) said that the post-2015 agenda should mobilize the international community to eradicate extreme poverty, defend human rights, demonstrate respect for the planet's limitations, promote universality and political coherence and guarantee justice and social inclusion for all. The success of the Millennium Development Goals had been guaranteed in part by a strict monitoring system. That system should inspire efforts with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals. Switzerland took account, in its work to promote sustainable development at the national and international levels, of the three dimensions of sustainable development that had been defined at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) held in 2012.

The success of the post-2015 agenda would depend on the establishment of a limited number of clear goals, which should include access for all to safe water and better health care and equality between the sexes. Good governance and accountability must lie at the heart of a renewed global partnership for development.

Annual Ministerial Review: Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals*Keynote addresses*

Ms. Bokova (Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that the task of meeting the Millennium Development Goals remained a priority, for which it would be vital to harness human ingenuity. Science, technology and innovation were necessary to realize the vision put forward by the Rio+20 conference of achieving social equity, environmental sustainability and inclusive economic development. UNESCO was working to strengthen national capacities in science, technology and innovation in over 20 African countries, to bridge the knowledge divide and promote sustainable development and economic growth. A stronger interface between science, policy and society would be needed to scale up efforts in that regard.

Scientific input should be sought in decision-making concerning everything from health to water management so as to ensure that better policies for inclusive development were established. It was essential to foster a culture of innovation based on the human dimension. Better education, enhanced support for research and development, stronger partnerships with the private sector and greater gender equality would contribute to that endeavour. Support for innovation went hand-in-hand with the promotion of cultural diversity, which was the greatest stimulus for new ideas and knowledge sharing. The Global Innovation Index demonstrated how creativity and the sharing of cultural goods could drive innovation.

It was time to recognize the potential of culture as a catalyst for sustainable development. The power of culture had already been leveraged to accelerate progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, create greater employment opportunities and boost creative industries. National cultural specificities nevertheless needed to be taken into account if development policies were to be effective. She encouraged the Council to adopt a ministerial declaration that emphasized the importance of culture, science, technology and innovation in the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. Touré (Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) said that bringing people online globally was vital if the benefits of Internet services and applications were to be shared with all. Rapid progress had been made in the field of global communications, although almost 70 per cent of people in the developing world still lacked Internet access. Affordable broadband access would provide a key enabling

infrastructure for all three pillars of sustainable development. The international community had a duty to provide safe, secure and affordable broadband access for all in the context of the post-2015 agenda.

The Union had been instrumental in setting up the Broadband Commission for Digital Development in 2010 with UNESCO. A platform for policy pioneers, industry executives, leading thinkers and academics, the Commission campaigned to raise awareness of the socioeconomic benefits associated with broadband networks in such areas as health, education and national competitiveness. One of the Commission's advocacy targets concerned the development of national broadband plans. However, plans were not enough; strong partnerships between Government, industry and other stakeholders were needed for the formulation of inclusive broadband policies.

Information communication technology was redefining development objectives and the very approach to meeting them. Delivering affordable access for all to such technology would be a vital driver of development, particularly in the context of the post-2015 agenda.

Mr. Heuer (Director-General, European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN)) said that there was a need to recognize science as being a part of culture. Scientific research was a driving force behind knowledge, technology and innovation processes. In a global competitive environment, all regions needed to step up support for research and innovation and the sustainable development of science and technology, if their economies were to grow.

Sustainable development depended on factors such as knowledge transfers across generations. Young people needed to be engaged in science. Flagship projects such as the large hadron collider project also had a role to play in encouraging people to consider the science that they relied on every day. Science needed to engage not just individuals but society as a whole. A science perspective should be included in international debates that lead to major economic decisions, although science must remain independent of political influence. The decision to grant observer status to CERN — a decision taken at the United Nations General Assembly in December 2012 — was a step in the right direction.

Cooperation and competition were needed to promote excellence and drive scientific research forward. Research was now a global activity and thus the importance of sharing information across developing and developed countries could not be overemphasized. Sustained support and long-term funding for scientific research were needed and should be provided without reference to political and economic cycles. CERN could serve as a model in meeting the challenges of scientific globalization. Governments should invest in scientific research and good education and encourage young people to take an interest in science and scientific careers.

Mr. Sengeh (Innovate Salone), accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that he had created the youth innovation platform "Innovate Salone", which was based in Sierra Leone, after realizing how fortunate he was to be able to use technology in his work at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and after recognizing the power of innovation. His goal in setting up Innovate Salone had been to challenge Sierra Leonean youth to devise solutions to problems in their own communities.

Through the platform, high-school students were encouraged to make innovations and received funding, expert mentorship and support from peer networks in that work. Innovations that had been devised by young people included renewable energy systems, makeshift radios and an anonymous e-voting system to reduce opportunities for electoral violence.

The participants were not just learning by making; they were acting as role models for their communities, demonstrating that local people could meet local challenges. It was

important to foster a culture of innovation in Africa, as overdependence on international aid undermined self-sufficiency. Innovation could help to reduce poverty, increase employment and foster economic growth. Further innovation platforms were needed, with a focus on hands-on learning. The value of creativity, critical thinking, empathy and integrity should be instilled in young people to achieve broader social impact. Enabling environments were needed to allow young people to freely develop solutions to tangible problems in their communities.

Such initiatives were not just about making products, but about broadening young people's minds. Innovation was vital for sustainable development, and the focus needed to be on harnessing the potential of youth.

Ms. Koller (Coursera), accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that she had co-founded the massive open online course initiative "Coursera" in 2011 to make high-quality university courses accessible on the Internet for free. Top universities from around the world contributed nearly 400 courses on subjects that ranged from philosophy to engineering, business and music. Teacher training material was also made available to address teacher shortages in certain parts of the world. Content could be accessed in several languages and in some cases was specifically geared towards those in developing countries.

Around four million people had enrolled on the courses to date, 40 per cent of them from the developing world. The courses were structured and students were set homework with deadlines. Students could join learning communities and interact with other students via online forums and face-to-face study groups. Their work was peer-assessed and they received a qualification at the end of the course. Similar learning models were being piloted across the world and were helping to turn high-quality education from the privilege of the few into a basic human right for all.

Launch of the Global Innovation Index

The President said that the Global Innovation Index was already the leading reference among innovation indices and had evolved into a valuable benchmarking tool. Science, technology and innovation were key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, because innovation capacity was critical to resolving health, education, agriculture and climate change issues.

The Secretary-General said that the 2013 Global Innovation Index showed that innovation was becoming an increasingly open, collaborative and international activity. It was nevertheless necessary to ensure that home-grown and locally-adapted innovation was encouraged.

Mr. Gurry (Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization) said that innovation was a major factor in economic growth and the main driver of efforts to create a better life in material terms. In turn, intellectual property systems played an essential role by capturing the economic value of innovation and reconciling the need to reward investment in it with the need to share its social benefits. For example, under the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons who are Blind, Visually Impaired or otherwise Print Disabled, improved access to published works would be provided to persons with disabilities, while incentives for publishers to produce new material would be preserved.

The Global Innovation Index was designed to provide a blueprint of innovation inputs and to benchmark country performances with a view to improving innovation capacity. The 2013 Index focused on the local dynamics of innovation, meaning local clusters of universities, businesses, specialized suppliers and service providers, and their impact. The Index, currently in its sixth edition, was rapidly becoming the global reference

on innovation for researchers and policymakers, and suggestions for further improvement were welcome.

Mr. Dutta (Graduate School of Management, Cornell University), accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that innovation was vitally important to overcoming the economic crisis. In fact, gross expenditures on research and development by many top-spending countries had been exhibiting an upward trend since 2010.

The 2013 Index revealed that, although high-income countries still dominated the rankings, several new players had increased their innovation capabilities and outputs. The ongoing correlation between income levels and innovation rankings warranted further research. One explanation was that, once a critical threshold had been passed, innovation led to a virtuous cycle. It was a matter of determining whether that threshold was attainable through added investment or, whether mindset and policy shifts were also required.

Describing how the Index was calculated, he said that the overall score was an average of the innovation input and innovation output sub-indices, which together accounted for 84 indicators. The innovation efficiency ratio showed how much innovation output a given country was getting for its inputs. Although the end results were in the form of several rankings, the Index was more about improving the measurement and understanding of innovation and identifying policies and good practices.

Mr. Lanvin (Executive Director, INSEAD European Competitiveness Initiative), accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that the economies of 142 countries had been examined for the 2013 Index. The exercise had yielded a number of clear messages. First, innovation was a global game, with top-ranking countries being identified in different parts of the world. Second, an innovation divide persisted between consistently top-ranking countries and other high- and middle-income countries that repeatedly failed to break into the top 25 rankings. However, there was room for cautious optimism, because the Index showed that some economies were rapidly improving their innovation capabilities in comparison to other countries in the same income groups. Although progress was not uniform, it reflected a good mix of policies. Third, the local dynamics of innovation were critically important: it was no longer a matter of merely replicating Silicon Valley, but of mixing company sizes, linking to global hubs and offering new opportunities for entrepreneurship.

The Index was much more than a ranking exercise. It provided benchmarks to stimulate local innovation and time series to monitor progress. It also showed that innovation was a mindset requiring the engagement of a multiplicity of stakeholders and that talent, and therefore education, was its core ingredient.

Mr. Mitra (National Innovation Council of India) said that three factors together made innovation absolutely vital for India. By 2025, India would be home to one fifth of the world's workers, 500 million of whom would be young people. Moreover, the country had the largest underprivileged population in absolute numbers. Lastly, India could not afford the services that its growing middle class needed. For those reasons, the Prime Minister had declared 2010–2020 the Decade of Innovation and had established the National Innovation Council. The Council was a keen proponent of local innovation and its goals were to make innovation inclusive, to expand innovation through technology and to build infrastructure to support innovation, including a national broadband network by 2017.

The Council had established the Inclusive Innovation Fund, State and city innovation councils and innovation awards and grants to foster innovation in local parliamentary constituencies and had hosted the annual Global Innovation Roundtable in Delhi. All those measures reflected a great desire on the part of the State to be a leader in the new innovation age.

Policy messages from the Annual Ministerial Review preparatory meetings

Mr. Kitwanga (Deputy Minister for the Environment, United Republic of Tanzania), reporting on the African regional preparatory meeting held in March 2013, said that the theme of the meeting had been “Innovation as enabler for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development”. The participants had identified innovation as the surest way of overcoming the technological, social, economic and environmental challenges involved in achieving the Goals. They had called for science, innovation and technology to be made an integral part of the post-2015 development framework and agreed that Governments should create and foster a comprehensive enabling environment for innovation. To that end, close cooperation between academia, Governments and industry, public-private partnerships, high-quality education and regulatory incentives as needed.

Measures must also be taken at the regional level to facilitate the transfer of ideas so as to help build capacity, especially among youth, and correct imbalances. African countries needed global support to promote science, technology and investment and achieve the Millennium Development Goals and sustainable development. The 2013 Ministerial Declaration should include a strong call for that support to be provided.

The President invited Mr. Manning, Chairman of the Institute of Development Studies of the United Kingdom to act as moderator.

Mr. Manning (Moderator) asked how local and traditional know-how could be harnessed for innovation.

Mr. Kitwanga (Deputy Minister for the Environment, United Republic of Tanzania) said that research institutions should be established to build on local knowledge and to make innovation accessible across Africa. There should be greater investment in education, especially in mathematics and science and technology transferred from industrialized countries should be adapted to the African context.

Ms. Triveño (Minister of Production, Peru), reporting on the regional preparatory meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean, said that great importance was attached to traditional knowledge in Peru and elsewhere in the region. The key to protecting that knowledge was to turn it into a product over which intellectual property rights could be asserted. Her Government was currently working with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) to ensure that industries wishing to make use of such knowledge paid royalties to the populations concerned.

Mr. Nonsrichai (Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Thailand), reporting on the regional preparatory meeting for Asia and the Pacific, said that participants had recognized that: clean, sustainable, affordable and accessible energy could be used to alleviate poverty and achieve sustainable development; renewable energy was one of the most effective solutions to sustainable development challenges in developing countries; and Governments needed to promote renewable energy technologies. National policies on science, technology and innovation must furthermore address the linkages between water, energy and food security so as to ensure a balanced approach to sustainable development.

In order to achieve energy security, affordability and sustainability, Governments needed to promote partnerships with a broad range of stakeholders. Intellectual property rights’ protection should moreover be flexible enough to allow renewable energy research, knowledge and technology to be shared freely, especially among less developed countries.

The Second Asia-Pacific Water Summit had provided a platform for discussions on water security and integrated water resources management. In that connection, science, technology and innovation could be used to help the region to conserve its limited resources of fresh water, improve its quality and combat desertification.

Mr. Meredov (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Turkmenistan), reporting on the regional preparatory meeting for Europe, said that science, technology and innovation held the key to sustainable development and technology transfers played a vital role in overcoming development challenges.

The participants at the preparatory meeting had agreed that innovation should be viewed as encompassing technological and non-technological aspects. Innovation policies should cut across all relevant areas and enjoy high-level support, while new approaches to consumption and production could help to reduce waste. Legal and financial barriers to innovation needed to be removed and public-private partnerships could help to mobilize funding for infrastructure development and for public services to support innovative economies.

During the preparatory meeting, several proposals had been made on ways to strengthen the role of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and to facilitate the sharing of good practices with regard to eco-innovation and small and medium-sized enterprises.

Ms. Triveño (Minister of Production, Peru) said that as the region of Latin America and the Caribbean was enjoying greater economic and social stability, it had attracted foreign investment. However, inequalities between different populations still existed. Information and communication technology could help by providing disadvantaged populations with access to education and health care, and by creating opportunities and increasing production. More needed to be done to improve broadband access and local infrastructures so as to narrow the digital divide. Indeed, access to technology should become part of State policy in the region.

Mr. Nonsrichai (Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Thailand) said that his Government had launched a scheme to provide certain groups of children with a tablet computer to familiarize them with technology that served as an educational tool. While the scheme had proven to be very popular, the lack of broadband access in remote areas had proven costly for the Government. Thailand, together with other countries from the region, had devised a programme to improve connectivity and broadband access in the region.

Mr. Kitwanga (Deputy Minister for the Environment, United Republic of Tanzania) said that information and communication technology had brought about dramatic changes in the African region. It could indeed serve to reduce inequalities and help combat corruption, as it did not depend on human interaction. The greatest challenge facing the African region was ensuring access to electricity, especially in remote areas.

Mr. Saif (Minister of Planning and International Cooperation and Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Jordan), reporting on the regional preparatory meeting for Western Asia, said that the meeting had been organized in cooperation with the technology centre of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Africa. It had yielded three main policy messages: the need to build and nurture innovative societies; the need to ensure that progress related to science, technology and innovation was inclusive; and the need to improve partnerships within the region and beyond.

Governments played a central role in promoting innovation. Innovation policies should be holistic and cover everything from basic education to the commercialization of new technology. National innovation strategies were needed to improve the science, technology and innovation ecosystem. However, the ability of developing countries to embrace such a strategy must be given due consideration.

Inclusiveness could be guaranteed if global technology were adapted to local contexts. Moreover, open-access resources provided an important tool for tackling

sustainable development challenges. However, unlocking the full potential of countries remained a challenge.

There was a pressing need to further develop regional cooperation and interregional partnerships to address shared challenges. Centres of excellence within the region could be used to form new partnerships with external stakeholders, provided that the focus was on regional priorities. In that connection, innovation was important in the search for solutions to challenges such as water security.

Mr. Manning (Moderator) asked what Governments were doing to enable small and medium-sized enterprises to develop and to afford them access to start-up capital.

Ms. Triveño (Minister of Production, Peru) said that encouraging small and medium-sized enterprises in Peru to engage with science, technology and innovation had proven to be a challenge. Many business owners had only a secondary education, were not familiar with technology and preferred face-to-face contact over technology. Her Government had devised a strategy that included both the use of technology and face-to-face contacts. Small business owners were encouraged to register and to file their taxes online. The use of technology was more prevalent in cities than in rural areas but a growing number of rural business owners were beginning to use mobile technology.

Mr. Meredov (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, Turkmenistan) said that new legal and economic conditions were needed to develop small and medium-sized enterprises. Given that Europe generated much of the new technology that was available at the global level, it was partly responsible for disseminating it. He reiterated the need for international cooperation in that endeavour.

Mr. Kitwanga (Deputy Minister for the Environment, United Republic of Tanzania) said that those who had acquired the relevant knowledge should be afforded access to start-up capital. Government policies needed to foster the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises by removing cross-border and regional barriers to competition. There was also a need for improved international cooperation in that regard.

Mr. Nonsrichai (Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Thailand) said that Governments should promote science, technology and innovation to strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises. They should provide more education and training and related incentives.

Mr. Saif (Minister of Planning and International Cooperation and Minister of Tourism and Antiquities, Jordan) said that inclusiveness should remain a priority in promoting innovation. In addition to education, making funding available to entrepreneurs and young people and protecting the rights of innovators were also essential.

Mr. Manning (Moderator) said that raising education standards should remain a priority for all Governments. There was clearly a need for: commitment to innovation at the highest level; public-private sector cooperation; centres of excellence for science, technology and innovation; efforts to address border issues in order for innovation to prosper; an inclusive approach to innovation; and regional and interregional cooperation to address shared challenges.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.