Economic and Social Council

Provisional
20 March 2001

Original: English

Resumed organizational session for 2001

Provisional summary record of the 4th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 13 March 2001, at 12.30 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Belinga-Eboutou . . . . (Cameroon)

Contents

The meeting was called to order at 12.40 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (*continued*)

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force (*continued*) (E/2001/7 and E/2001/L.4)

Draft decision E/2001/L.4

1.   **The President** said that draft decision E/2001/L.4 entitled "Information and Communication Technologies Task Force" had just been adopted ad referendum during informal consultations.

2.   *Draft decision E/2001/L.4 was adopted.*

3.   **Mr. Zarie Zare** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that there was a wide consensus that information and communication technologies (ICT) could contribute tremendously to economic growth, social development and the promotion of sustainable development. However, the ICT revolution also posed challenges and risks and could lead to the further exacerbation of disparities within and among countries. Moreover, the emerging new knowledge-based economy remained concentrated in the developed countries and its huge potential for advancing economic growth and development, especially in developing countries, still remained to be materialized. Concentrated and focused initiatives and actions were therefore needed, at the national, regional and global levels, to bridge the digital divide and place ICT at the service of development for all.

4.   Education, including basic and digital literacy, access and connectivity, and regulatory and legal frameworks were major components for utilizing ICT for development. Facilitating the transfer of ICT to developing countries and supporting capacity-building and the development of local content were other major steps that should be taken to ensure the participation of developing countries in the knowledge-based economy. The ICT revolution should not be considered a substitute for efforts to ensure the development and modernization of basic sectors of the economy but should complement and enhance those efforts. Unimpeded access to the Internet would foster a culturally diverse cyberspace and encourage entrance to the knowledge-based economy by firms and individuals in developing countries. Any initiative for the development of norms and standards for the expansion and utilization of ICT should take into account the priorities of the ICT sector itself and address such issues as cultural diversity, information ethics, privacy, security and cyber crime.

5.   As had been clearly indicated in the Ministerial Declaration adopted by the Council at its substantive session of 2000, market forces alone could not place ICT at the service of development; there was therefore a need for a genuine partnership and effective collaborative efforts involving Governments, multilateral development institutions, bilateral donors, the business sector, civil society and other relevant stakeholders. Such partnership should contribute towards the transfer of technology to developing countries on concessional and preferential terms, the mobilization of resources at the national and international levels, and the promotion of capacity-building. The United Nations had a major role to play in such partnership and in the promotion of ICT for development. It could also provide global leadership in bridging the digital gap through a coordinated system-wide approach.

6.   The Group of 77 and China believed that the establishment of the ICT Task Force was a major step forward that could contribute to the development of business and regulatory models which were inclusive and responsive to the needs of developing countries. They supported the overall objectives of the Task Force and believed that it should be financed through new and additional resources and not through the diversion of resources from other development efforts. The provision of voluntary contributions to support the functioning of the Task Force and its secretariat in an expeditious manner was equally imperative.

7.   **The President** said that the Council had adopted a historic draft decision; it would await the report of the Secretary-General on its implementation.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.