

Provisional

19 July 2013

Original: English

Economic and Social Council

Substantive session of 2013

High-level segment

Provisional summary record of the 18th meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on 3 July 2013, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Osorio.....(Colombia)
later: Mr. Sajdik (Vice-President).....(Austria)

Contents

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

Implementation Forum

Special keynote address

Panel discussion: International cooperation in the development, transfer and diffusion of technologies in Africa and least developed countries

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Editing Unit, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Implementation Forum

The President said that the Implementation Forum provided a dedicated space for discussing the role of the Economic and Social Council in shaping the future and would be an essential part of the high-level political forum that the Council would establish in the coming years. The Implementation Forum brought together Governments, the private sector, civil society and members of the United Nations system to discuss how best to achieve sustainable development for all.

In view of its extensive experience in that area, the Council was well placed to participate in: the monitoring and review of progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals; the follow-up to major global summits and conferences; and the setting of the post-2015 development agenda. Furthermore, the Council recognized the importance of science, technology, innovation and culture as tools for achieving sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Amin (Moderator), Director-General of the International Renewable Energy Agency said that the Implementation Forum would provide valuable insight into some of the initiatives undertaken to promote sustainable development and to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Krisciunas (Observer for Lithuania) said that a Lithuanian company had developed and launched new technology for decontaminating polluted land. The technology was used in a three-step process that involved: treating the land using biodegradants; destroying the remaining pollutants through biodegradation; and rehabilitating the treated land. The technology had proven to be 100 per cent effective and was environmentally friendly. The technology could be used to treat severely polluted land or to maintain land in around establishments such as petrol stations and oil refineries.

Mr. Ota (Mayor, Toyota City, Japan) said that the earthquake in Japan had highlighted the importance of having access to a power supply. Advanced technology was being used to establish “smart” communities based on the local production and consumption of renewable energy. Initiatives undertaken in the areas of transport and communications had served to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, create jobs and raise living standards.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand) said that over 70 per cent of energy in his country was generated from renewable sources. New Zealand was therefore well placed to provide renewable energy solutions to other countries in the Pacific region. The fact that many Pacific island countries were still heavily reliant on fossil fuels to generate electricity had prompted his Government and the European Union to organize the Pacific Energy Summit. The Summit had brought together Pacific island leaders and major investors and had led to many commitments being made to explore alternative solutions. New Zealand had invested in renewable energy projects in a number of countries in the Pacific region. The Pacific Energy Summit could serve as a model for other regions wishing to translate renewable energy projects into action.

Ms. Lanteri (Observer for Monaco) said that her Government recognized the importance of tackling neglected diseases and of strengthening local research structures. Monaco had been involved in developing a Senegalese platform for clinical research. A biomedical research centre carried out high-quality research on neglected infectious

diseases and was recognized for its expertise by the international scientific community. The centre had made significant advances in clinical practices and had developed both medical tools and quality control procedures. It also played an important role in bridging the North-South divide in the field of medical research and showed how developing countries could tackle neglected health problems.

Mr. Mrad (Director of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia Technology Centre) said that, in 2012, the Technology Centre had conducted a technology commercialization tour in a number of countries in the Western Asia region. It had opened up an online platform where technology companies that were less than 3 years old and in need of investment could register. Five months later, 11 business deals had been concluded. The Technology Centre hoped to scale up that initiative with a view to involving all the countries in the region.

Mr. Dossal (Chairman, Global Partnerships Forum) said that the initiative could serve as a model for other regions and for the members of the United Nations system. National chambers of commerce and the regional commissions in particular should give the initiative serious consideration.

Mr. Zavazava (Project Support and Knowledge Management Department, International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) said that mobile technology was easy to roll out and was accessible to residents of developing countries living in remote areas. The m-Powering Development Initiative was designed to leverage the ubiquity of mobile technology, facilitate the delivery of services such as banking, education and health care on the move and thus promote socioeconomic development.

Mr. Prado (Deputy Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) said that the Commission facilitated exchanges of experience and capacity-building through: its participation in the regional dialogue and in the Regional Observatory on Broadband; the support that it provided to Governments in devising and implementing regional cooperation projects to develop broadband infrastructure; the setting up of the School for Policymakers in Science, Technology and Innovation; and the development of a computerized statistical database. More recently, the Commission had helped to convene a ministerial meeting on innovation and structural change in Latin America and the Caribbean, which had been held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2013.

Ms. Navarrete Moreno (World Bank) said that policymakers encountered a number of problems when attempting to build an efficient and effective innovation ecosystem. In an effort to help them to overcome those problems, the World Bank and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) had devised a virtual platform that provided them with all the knowledge that they required in one place. The virtual platform included a knowledge repository on innovation policy and information to help policymakers bring that knowledge to bear in practice.

Ms. Kalonji (Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that the World Bank/OECD initiative would make a valuable addition to the information platforms already available on innovation policy. However, given that similar initiatives had been launched by the European Union and UNESCO, care should be taken to avoid duplication.

Ms. Jamaa (Director, Qualcomm Wireless Reach initiative) said that having access to next-generation mobile technology could improve the lives of many people. The Qualcomm Wireless Reach initiative developed in Spain was designed to promote entrepreneurship and education. As part of the initiative, an online course on developing mobile phone applications using “Weprendo” platform had been designed in collaboration with various partners. The course was cost-free and the fact that it had been conceived in

Spanish meant that it would be accessible to Spanish speakers around the world. There were plans to make the course available in other languages.

Mr. Al-Hashemi (Qatar) commended Qualcomm on its Wireless Reach initiative. He said that the recent changes within the Government of Qatar had led to the creation of a new ministry for technology and communication. The Ministry attached particular importance to improving infrastructure in the region and to developing young people's potential for innovation. Qatar had invested heavily in initiatives to create an innovative and modern economy. The formation of public-private partnerships had also led to significant progress in that area. Efforts were under way to introduce a five-year strategy for science, technology and innovation in Qatar. By 2015, the majority of households would have access to a new, high-speed broadband Internet service.

Mr. Amin (Moderator) said that the renewable energy market had grown significantly in recent years thanks to improved technology, innovation and refined business models. However, there was still a lack of specific information about the cost of technology. The International Renewable Energy Agency had launched an initiative to collect data from projects around the world and use it to identify the true cost of renewable energy. That information would allow Governments and investors to take rational investment decisions in the future.

Mr. Dossal (Chairman, Global Partnerships Forum) asked whether the details of other initiatives being launched around the world could be compiled in a global database to facilitate information sharing.

Special keynote address

Mr. Santos Calderón (President of Colombia) said that sustainable development and the eradication of poverty were global goals that needed to be pursued simultaneously, with input from all stakeholders. Stakeholders were increasingly working together to meet those goals, although a lack of commitment was hindering progress. Developing countries were making great strides in achieving equality, sustainability and financial stability and were contributing proportionally more to the growth and well-being of the planet than developed countries. It was time for developed countries to demonstrate the same level of commitment.

Since 2007, advanced economies had been a source of great instability for the international financial system and for trade. The effects had been felt in Latin America, especially in the agricultural and industrial sectors. Although the tendency was to turn inwards in times of crisis, developed countries should bear in mind that countries were interdependent and should make the changes necessary to stabilize the global economy.

Colombia had made significant progress towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals. Over 2.3 million Colombians had gained access to employment since 2010, the target of universal education coverage had been reached, and access to free secondary education was guaranteed for all. Colombia was one of the countries in Latin America which had had the most success in reducing poverty and inequality. The Government was tackling poverty from the perspective of ending exclusion and promoting full citizenship. Since 2010, it had been working to develop an index to monitor poverty and define poverty-reduction policies. The Government was also striving to resolve the country's long-standing internal conflict and was grateful for the international community's support in that regard. It was now participating in the working group set up to define sustainable development goals and the conditions for their achievement.

To achieve sustainable development, an open and fair trading system must be established and steps taken to promote global financial stability and reduce illicit financial flows. Cooperation was furthermore needed to address the problem of climate change and

facilitate access to science, technology and innovation. Globalization must be better managed and a balance struck between the role of the markets and that of Governments. He recognized that free trade and investment were needed to generate growth, but also knew that State intervention was necessary if the benefits of growth were to be fairly distributed across society. As for global institutions, while strong, rules-based multilateralism was a good objective, fair and sustainable outcomes were more important still. He supported the process of strengthening the work of the Council.

The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.

In the absence of Mr. Osorio (Colombia), Mr. Sajdik (Austria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The President said that science, technology and innovation had the power to transform societies, improve economic competitiveness and resilience and support development. The challenge, however was for countries was to absorb existing knowledge, acquire skills and use them in economic activities that enhanced the material well-being of their people. Advances in technology, science and innovation should be harnessed to meet the numerous challenges of sustainable development, not least in Africa and the least developed countries.

Africa had some of the world's fastest growth rates in terms of gross domestic product (GDP), but also faced some of the most significant development challenges. There was a need to provide better support for the development and transfer of technologies within and between African countries. The panel discussion that would now take place would focus on the main obstacles to technological development in Africa and on the measures to be taken to overcome them.

Panel discussion: International cooperation in the development, transfer and diffusion of technologies in Africa and least developed countries

Mr. Amin (Moderator) said that in the past Africa had been seen as a continent of stagnation, poverty and underdevelopment, but today it was a champion of growth. Indeed, in recent years, six of the fastest growing economies in the world had been African. However, the continent still had to deal with the challenges of environmental sustainability, resource availability, skill-base development and sustainable financing. One important question was how Africa could harness new technology and embrace technology transfers as an investment in growth and development.

Mr. Kitwanga (Observer for the United Republic of Tanzania), Deputy Minister for the Environment said that a meeting of the Smart Partnership Dialogue had just concluded in Dar es Salaam. The focus had been on leveraging the power of technology for socioeconomic growth in Africa. Science and technology development was at the top of the agenda for the United Republic of Tanzania as it sought to move towards middle-income country status. The Government was exploring the idea of setting up a fibre-optic broadband network to link universities and research institutions throughout the country to one another and to entities across the borders. A database was being developed to provide researchers with access to the details of science and technology research projects across the country. In the previous five years, the Government had increased the amount that it invested in research from 0.01 to 0.26 per cent of GDP, and the aim was to reach 1 per cent in the coming years.

The potential of technology was already being explored in the agricultural sector. Under the "Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor" initiative, small-scale farmers were given access to irrigation technology and had more contact with large-scale farmers, who could provide factory capacity and equipment. The challenge now was to find a way to reduce the dependency of small-scale farmers on large-scale farmers.

Mr. De-Paul Ikounga (Observer for the African Union), Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, said that African leaders must be proactive in acquiring technology and must develop the capacity to absorb it. In the extractive industries and agriculture, better training, research and organization were needed to allow for innovation. Ambitious plans to found a pan-African university that offered high-quality education and opportunities to conduct research into technology for the continent were being discussed. A plan of action to develop a consistent approach to technology acquisition across the continent was being designed. Agriculture was the main area in which the potential of technology would be explored. The goal was to drive forward the process of industrialization and improve marketing and distribution in the interests of enhancing food quality and security. More innovative approaches were needed to eradicate hunger in Africa.

Mr. Lopes (Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa) said that one way to improve the economic outlook in Africa was through industrialization and the creation of added value. Rather than exporting raw materials, African countries needed to manufacture end products. Another key element was capacity development, which included capacity-building and capacity retention (the prevention of a brain drain). International institutions and donors had in the past invested in capacity-building for individuals and institutional capacity-building through one-off projects. Lasting transformation, however, would only result from broad institutional and strategic capacity-building.

Countries were eager to graduate from the list of least developed countries (LDCs). In that context, the Economic Commission for Africa, the African Union and the African Development Bank were developing strategic approaches to fulfil the Africa 2063 vision. “Frugal innovation” was a potent symbol of the new Africa, which, among other things, led the world in the area of mobile banking. Intellectual property rights regimes were unfriendly to newcomers and should be modified to accommodate the needs of LDCs. Control of patents meant control of knowledge. Multinational companies, for instance, inundated the system with patents, rendering it nearly impossible for newcomers to gain access.

Mr. Acharya (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS)) said that, at the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries half the current LDCs had declared their desire to graduate from the list by 2022. The Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011–2020 (Istanbul Programme of Action) emphasized the need to boost productive capacity in LDCs. Science, technology and innovation should be employed to promote industrialization based on sustainable agricultural development. Governments of LDCs were showing greater commitment to science, providing increased funding for research and developing public-private partnerships. Economic progress in LDCs depended not just on having access to technology, but also on adapting technology to local requirements and disseminating it widely. The United Nations was considering plans to establish a global technology bank to guide the technology transfer process.

Ms. Okeke (University of Nigeria) said that the science sector needed support from the State and society. In order for new technologies to take root, they must be tailored to countries’ needs and countries must have properly trained scientists. She noted that women in many African countries were discouraged from entering the sciences.

Mr. Dijkerman (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)) said that knowledge itself had become a product and a capital good. Continued regional inequality, which was exacerbated by the patents regime, was hampering economic growth around the world. Governments constituted the lynchpin of development. They

must create an appropriate regulatory climate, encourage business to innovate and coordinate with the private sector, multinationals, NGOs and other stakeholders.

Donors were again focusing on agriculture but, rather than providing seed and tools, they were considering knowledge-based solutions, which were often designed in developing countries, and ways of financing and implementing them. Increasingly, the emphasis was on global value chains. In that context, OECD had developed a database on trade and value added that provided some insight into development, taxation and legislation issues.

Mr. Ali Osman (Sudan) said that he would like to know how the international community would help African LDCs to face challenges associated with public debt, conflict and climate change.

Mr. Toro Carreño (Observer for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) asked how the international community could improve access to technology in LDCs through education and training.

Mr. Zinsou (Benin) said that his country recognized the importance of building value chains and that it had imported six food-processing factories from India. It was essential for developing countries to manufacture their own finished products rather than merely exporting raw materials.

Mr. Fransman (South Africa) said that international protocols were needed to manage technology transfers between developed and developing countries. A strategy should be put in place to help LDCs retain and build on technology and skills acquired and to protect the ownership of locally-developed technologies.

Ms. Arrieta Munguía (Mexico) suggested that the mooted technology bank could serve to provide data on best practices of developing countries. That would help to foster triangular development cooperation and South-South cooperation.

Ms. Gbeneol (Nigeria) said that more needed to be done to ensure that science and technology education in developing countries was in tune with the specific needs of those countries.

Mr. De-Paul Ikounga (Observer for the African Union) said that awareness of the importance of science, technology and innovation should be raised in LDCs and that school and university curricula needed to reflect a country's specific development needs.

Ms. Okeke (University of Nigeria) said that science students were provided with education on certain aspects of the humanities and that the same kind of approach should be for humanities students.

Mr. Acharya (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLS)) said that a mutual accountability mechanism should be established to encourage LDCs and their developed and developing world partners to help countries to graduate from the LDCs lists. LDCs themselves should focus on building productive capacity. While it was true that local, low-cost innovations were important, cutting-edge technologies could not be ignored, as they often allowed developing countries to leap ahead.

Mr. Dijkerman (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)) said that Governments should focus on competition and tax policies, investment in education and health, the promotion of regional and worldwide partnerships and coordination with the private sector. Ultimately, Governments were responsible for creating an environment that enabled science, technology and innovation to flourish and led to economic growth.

Mr. Kitwanga (Observer for the United Republic of Tanzania) urged developed countries to focus on building human capacities and financing modern research infrastructure in LDCs. Governments in LDCs should create conditions conducive to preventing the brain drain.

Mr. Lopes (Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa) said that he agreed with the representative of South Africa on the usefulness of protocols to manage technology transfers and the need to protect locally-produced technology. Public debt was no longer a serious issue in Africa and far fewer Africans were currently affected by armed conflict than in the 1990s. A handful of African States had adopted a proactive approach to climate change but it was true that most were doing little to meet that challenge.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.