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**Economic and Social Council**

**Substantive session of 2013**

High-level segment

**Provisional summary record of the 20th meeting (Chamber B)**

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Thursday, 4 July 2013, at 10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Sajdik (Vice-President) .....(Austria)

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General debate (*continued*)

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

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**General debate** (*continued*)

**Mr. Cruz Toruño** (Nicaragua) said that there was an urgent need for a structural reform of the international financial system that took into account the needs and priorities of developing economies. Developing countries, furthermore, needed to adapt quickly to technological advances in order to remain competitive and to create effective production processes. The effective shift from science and technology and research and development activities to innovation with a human development focus was a challenge.

To make the transition from an agriculture-based economy to an industrialized, service-based economy, the Government of Nicaragua had adopted a national development plan that was designed to align scientific research objectives with socioeconomic needs, to promote innovation and to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. In addition, the national education and knowledge creation system was being improved to build the capacities of innovative institutions and upgrade the skills of workers, and a national prize had been established for innovation in fields such as information and communication technology, agriculture, climate change, renewable energy and health.

**Mr. Ayoko** (Nigeria) said that he supported the Secretary-General's recommendation on the establishment of a technology facilitation mechanism as a means of bridging the North-South digital divide. He said that developing countries must be given unconditional access to scientific research and technology if they were to meet the targets in the Millennium Development Goals. In that connection, he called on industrialized countries to honour their commitments regarding technology transfers.

National Governments should remain the chief agents of investment in science, technology and innovation, but the growing contribution of the private sector, research institutions and development partners should also be recognized. He urged Governments to design policies that were gender sensitive and fostered the creation of an environment conducive to inclusive innovation and to make culture, including traditional knowledge, an integral part of economic, social and environmental policies. The Transformation Agenda adopted by the Government of President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria supported cutting-edge research in science, technology and innovation and promoted cooperation between research institutions, academia and industry.

**Ms. Kasnakli** (Turkey) said that Turkey had been incorporating sustainable development into its planning and policies since the 1990s and was pursuing a comprehensive research and development strategy based on public-private partnerships and collaboration between academia and industry. Over the coming 10 years, the proportion of the government budget accounted for by research and development funding would rise from 1 to 3 per cent, while US\$ 1 billion would be spent annually on private sector incentives for investment in innovation.

The Government had launched the "Fatih" project to give teachers electronic access to all teaching materials, facilitate distance learning and establish a network of educator training centres. Turkey continued to increase the amount and geographical scope of its official development assistance spending, which had risen to US\$ 2.6 billion in 2012. Recalling that Turkey had hosted the Fourth United Nations Conference on the least developed countries, she called for effective action to be taken to follow up on and implement the Istanbul Programme of Action. She said that her Government had offered to host the midterm review conference in 2015. The Government was also considering plans to set up a technology bank and science, technology and innovation supporting mechanism

for the Least Developed Countries. Lastly, Turkey would be holding a regional consultation in September 2013 on the post-2015 development agenda.

**Mr. Toro** (Observer for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that science, technology and innovation should serve as tools for poverty eradication and the achievement of sustainable development. Incentives should be provided for research in that regard and support given for the development of open software and the democratization of information access. Technology transfers should not be merely about the product but also about transmitting knowledge, skills and methodologies. The other vital component of sustainable development and the post-2015 agenda should be culture. Cultural know-how and output should be protected. Intellectual property rights should be granted to developers rather than businesses, which merely profited from work that they had not produced. In the Latin American and Caribbean region, the inclusion of cultural identity as a factor in sustainable development would imply that recognition should be given to regional customs and minority rights and that ancient traditions that exalted harmony with nature should be preserved. Culture was a strategic element in the implementation of national and international development policies.

**Archbishop Tomasi** (Observer for the Holy See) said that economic and technological progress alone were insufficient; effective human development had to be human-centred and include the element of culture as a strategic resource. Technology should be used ethically and not in such a way as to override concerns for human dignity and rights. The idea that scientific research should serve as an end in itself must be eschewed, and the benefits of innovation must be shared equitably. The poorest countries should be given special consideration with regard to the promotion of scientific knowledge, technology transfers and innovation-sharing. As the international community worked to redefine sustainable development, it should consider how greater equality and prosperity would be achieved through investment in education and innovation. Human aspirations and freedoms must, however, lie at the heart of sustainable development policies and programmes.

**Mr. Tinajero Esquivel** (Mexico) said that the coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council still needed to be strengthened to ensure that consistent approaches were taken to socioeconomic and environmental issues and to support national capacity-building. The dialogue with the international financial institutions should be made more interactive and involve States and other stakeholders. There should be more convergence between the efforts of the United Nations system regarding science and technology and those of the Council's regional commissions, and the work of the Committee for Development Policy should be strengthened.

With regard to sustainable development, he welcomed the proposal concerning the use of disaggregated indicators to measure progress on the post-2015 targets and called for the inclusion of job creation, especially for young people, as an indicator in the new agenda. He recalled how the potential of light had been used in science to effect a revolution in technology applications for education and communications and said that as a sponsor of the initiative to declare 2015 the International Year of Light, Mexico would be submitting a draft resolution to the General Assembly at its next session on the potential uses and benefits of optics and light technology.

**Ms. Lüdi** (International Federation for Home Economics) said that research in home economics had led to innovation in areas such as household technologies and processes. A solid home economics education was thus of the utmost importance and a component of processes to achieve development. To help achieve the goals of eradicating poverty and hunger, steps needed to be taken to shift from traditional food production and farming practices to more sustainable processes and from traditional to clean cooking solutions.

**Ms. Wagenknecht** (International Federation of University Women) said that her organization was seriously concerned by the gender imbalance that persisted in science, technology and innovation at the global level. Women were consistently underrepresented in the skilled technology workforce and in the senior management of large companies. In order to reduce gender inequalities in education, educational policies should be developed to encourage women to enrol in science, technology and innovation programmes. Incentive programmes should be launched to increase the participation of women in scientific and technological research, legislation should be introduced to support equal pay and gender mainstreaming and female scientists should be involved in policymaking.

**Mr. Polzer** (International Association for the Advancement of Innovative Approaches to Global Challenges) said that his organization developed computer-based tools and devised campaigns to familiarize citizens with United Nations programmes and goals. The organization had been particularly active in the context of Rio+20 and had organized various activities to encourage young people to express their views on sustainable development. He underscored the need for greater commitment and innovation in order to address global challenges and recalled the importance of efforts to improve the efficiency of the United Nations system and ensure the long-term viability of sustainable development processes.

**Mr. Alfonsi** (Centro di Ricerca e Documentazione Febbraio 74) said that, for many people, the connection between science and the life of society often remained unclear. In order to remedy that situation, efforts should be made to show how the two were interlinked and cooperation among all relevant actors should be improved to harness science, technology and innovation to promote sustainable development. “Knowledge brokerage” was an effective instrument for transmitting scientific knowledge to policymakers and stakeholders. It engaged the scientific community, which must “contextualize” research in any given society, and other stakeholders who needed to participate in decisions on research and technological choices. Achieving a better understanding of the links between society and science was essential for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

**Mr. Husmali** (The Journalists and Writers Foundation) said that free and fair access to education was an essential component of sustainable development, as only educated people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds could help to accomplish major development goals. Based on an innovative educational model, private secular schools had been established in many countries around the world. The ethos of the schools, which delivered education in mathematics, science and technology as well as the arts, was to promote peaceful coexistence among different cultures. The schools followed the curricula of their host country and welcomed children from diverse cultural backgrounds. That innovative educational model was an example of how science and technology could be used to promote peace and to accomplish development goals.

**Mr. Socías** (International Federation for Family Development) said that empowering and investing in families was an integral component of sustainable development. In 2011, the Secretary-General of the United Nations had said the fact that the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family would fall on the eve of the target year of the Millennium Development Goals would provide an opportunity to refocus on the role of families in development. Indeed, it would be difficult to achieve the Millennium Development Goals unless the strategies to accomplish them focused on the family. The International Federation for Family Development recommended that “family impact reports” should be used to assess the impact of certain policy measures on opportunities for families. The introduction of such a tool would help to mainstream a family perspective in policymaking at all levels.

**Mr. Cavaliere** (World Jewellery Confederation) said that the role of his organization was to ensure that the international jewellery industry promoted sustainable economic and social development. The role of science, technology and innovation in promoting development had been discussed at the Confederation's annual congress in May 2013. Related topics of discussion had included: the knowledge gap in the diamond sector; the high unemployment rate among educated young people; problems between emerging and well-established innovation centres; the need for good governance in order to prevent corruption; and the efforts undertaken to increase security in mining. Lastly, he underscored the importance of the jewellery industry in creating jobs and stimulating sustainable economic activities.

**Mr. Diserens** (Convention of Independent Financial Advisors) said that the discussions held in April 2013 at the Convention's Eleventh International Forum had highlighted the pressing need for Governments and civil society to reform the current financial system. The Convention considered Millennium Development Goal 8 in its work. It called for an open, rule-based trading and financial system to be established; for more aid to be provided to countries committed to poverty reduction; for a review to be conducted of the debt problems of developing countries; and for active cooperation to be established with the private sector to tackle unemployment. Affordable access must furthermore be provided to essential drugs and intellectual property rights used to protect developers of new technology. More attention must be given to the problems of developing, landlocked and small countries. A new link between the Convention and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations had been established, since both entities had a mission to protect the gains scored by diverse civilizations.

**Ms. Luthra** (Women's Health and Education Center) said that the Internet played a part in improving women's health because it facilitated the sharing of knowledge and expertise at the global level. Her organization had been set up to educate health-care providers and policymakers working to improve conditions for mothers. It called for investments to be made in wireless technology, which could be used to help tackle problems relating to maternal mortality and morbidity in developing countries. E-learning was the most cost-effective way of transmitting information on evidence-based medicine to such countries.

**Mr. Schmitt** (Organisation mondiale des associations pour l'éducation prénatale) said that the advancement of women was a sine qua non for sustainable development. Women were key actors in change processes and his organization campaigned for better recognition of feminine values, the power of women in the cycle of life and women's role in prenatal education. Education for life, communication and training tools could provide a powerful impetus for the achievement of progress in the promotion of prosperity, well-being and peace. Transmission of knowledge on the use of such tools was a priority for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

**Ms. Cacace** (Assemblea delle Donne per lo Sviluppo e la Lotta Contro l'Esclusione Sociale) said that her organization managed integrated action plans on gender equality in science and technology at nine European universities and one innovation agency. It did so in the context of the European Commission's structural change programmes. Structural change projects were powerful tools for promoting gender equality and could be used to strengthen science and innovation systems in any country.

Gender balance presence was especially crucial in science and technology if the most was to be made of all available talent, if women's specific qualities and perspectives were to be harnessed and if research and innovation were to be made more responsive to the needs of the population at large. Research institutions should be made more welcoming for women, the gender dimension should be incorporated into scientific research frameworks and women's leadership in science should be promoted.

**Ms. La Rose** (Child Helpline International) said that innovation and new technology were necessary for development, but had also made children and young people extremely vulnerable. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Child Online Protection Initiative, with which her organization was involved, was a response to the rise in the number of cases of online abuse of children.

The data received from some 130 million helpline contacts showed how the economic crisis was exacerbating the problem of abuse and violence against children. Many abused children were potential innovators. If their needs were not met and they did not have a safe environment, they would be deprived of the opportunity to develop their full potential and society would be deprived of the human capital needed for innovation and development. The achievement of any development goal was possible only when countries protected their human capital, namely, the children and young people. The protection of young people should form part of the agenda for sustainable and equitable growth and Governments should be encouraged to support child helplines, not least as unique sources of information about young people's needs.

**Mr. Seidler** (Internet Society) said that the Internet empowered people to gain access to unlimited knowledge and educational material. It also empowered them to innovate without having to ask for permission. It was a space that rewarded creativity and new ideas. To live up to its promise as a driver of sustainable development, however, it needed to be developed based on a collaborative approach. Open, multi-stakeholder standards were needed if the Internet was to connect individuals and enable them to engage in cultural and economic exchanges on a global scale. In the multi-stakeholder model, Governments, civil society, the private sector and the technical community had equally important roles to play. His organization was committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure that the Internet could fulfil its potential for promoting development, human rights and innovation.

**Mr. Alluri** (Manavata) said that the mission of his organization was to create a harmonious world through the application of sustainable rural development programmes. Given that most of the world's poverty and food production were found in rural areas, such programmes had an important role to play in empowering those living in rural areas through education, innovation and the development of sustainable agriculture. They applied a proven, low-budget method that could be replicated easily, and that did not compromise on human values, ethics or the environment. His organization stood ready to support sustainable rural development programmes in any country.

**Ms. Makou** (Organisation pour la communication en Afrique et de promotion de la coopération économique internationale) said that achieving food security through sustainable, equitable agriculture that focused on small farmers was central to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and to promoting economic growth and development in Africa. A major obstacle to food security in Africa was the marginalization of small farmers. Opening up markets was important, but free markets alone could not bring food security or alleviate hunger. Governments needed to get involved. In particular, train farmers to keep up with technical developments and formulate and implement policies to promote women's access to and ownership of land. That objective was of particular importance, since women who did not own land had great difficulty obtaining credit.

**Ms. Barbier** (Hope International) said that it was disappointing for NGOs to be speaking in a room where they would not be heard. She said that the right to development was a complex topic that deserved better than a short oral statement and should be addressed in an appropriate forum. A "periodic review of development" should be instituted.

Development was closely related to technological progress, as was shown by the path that the so-called “rich” countries had taken. Mere technological advances were not the solution, however. Experience had shown that there could be no development without appropriate technology which, being easily assimilable, was therefore more efficient. According to a recent report by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in the past 200 years, science had mainly been used as a tool for economic expansion. Growth in productivity accompanied by with growth in unemployment and poverty was not socially acceptable. Technology transfer should be a holistic process that benefited everyone.

**Ms. Bernabei** (International Ontopsychology Association), reporting on her association’s recent symposium on cultural diversity as a driving force for all mankind, said that the event had been attended by representatives of the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, which supported the goal of harnessing scientific and artistic vitality. A model of environmental education that combined urban planning and human development was being propagated at major universities. The aim was to train teachers of ontopsychology around the world. Through the conduct of scientific and humanistic research in physics, medicine, philosophy and economics, her association attempted to create a scientific basis for the promotion of humanistic values and to create replicable models for use in all cultures. The association would continue to encourage efforts to ensure that the post-2015 agenda brought about global structural transformations.

**Ms. Lago Gómez** (Unión de Asociaciones Familiares) said that, in order to attain the target set in Millennium Development Goal 7 of ensuring environmental sustainability, steps should be taken to encourage citizens to take an interest in sustainable mobility and climate change prevention. There was a need to change behaviour patterns in and foster the efficient use of natural resources. As part of a project established with the support of the Government of Spain, her organization had set up a website for children, families and teachers to explore options for sustainable mobility. An extensive publicity campaign, reaching some 400,000 people, had helped to increase awareness of the issue. In that way the project made a direct contribution to the integration of sustainable development into national policies and programmes and the reversal of the loss of environmental resources.

*The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.*