



## Economic and Social Council

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### **Statement submitted by Fundación Proceso ECO, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



## Statement

### **RIA: using technology for social development**

Using technology as a means to foster social development, the Fundación Proceso ECO developed a network of educational centres in low-income communities, called the learning and innovation network, or RIA. This network of 70 centres in 34 municipalities provides access to digital and educational resources in order to bridge the digital divide in Mexico. Through digital inclusion, the RIA aims to increase the opportunities and competitiveness of more than 73 million Mexicans who lack the digital access and technological skills necessary for participating in the labour market. In Mexico's case, the majority of youth will find it challenging to compete in a globalized economy given the large digital divide.

In the past decade, many social and educational projects have focused on equipping users with computers. This, however, is only half of the equation. For technology to be effective in learning environments and to contribute to the social development of communities, it is necessary to guarantee quality educational content and training through the support of a facilitator. Thus, courses at the RIA are open to diverse users, designed to be flexible and modular and include both assisted and autonomous modalities.

The RIA optimizes its technological infrastructure by creating learning environments where users can access technology and education without paying for related costs such as electricity, Internet or software. On average, each RIA computer is used by 104 users per year, thus reducing the ecological footprint of the technology and diluting operational costs. Moreover, every RIA centre has been designed with modular architecture and uses recycled materials for its construction.

After four years of operation, the RIA has enrolled more than 348,000 users, of which more than 106,000 have graduated from its courses. With a basic computing course of 72 hours, the RIA creates digital citizens that adopt technology and participate in a globalized community. In a social return on investment study conducted in 2011 by students from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, United States of America, the Fundación Proceso ECO was able to conclude that a woman who has graduated from the basic RIA computing courses has four times more opportunities to find a job. The study also concluded that for every \$1 invested in the RIA, \$1.74 is generated in economic growth.

In line with the Millennium Development Goals, the RIA aims to foster educational and social development by making available the benefits of new information and communications technology. Promoting digital inclusion is instrumental in improving access to basic educational, financial and medical services for those who lack them. It also enables the democratization of information, fosters access to knowledge and empowers communities by transforming individuals into digital citizens with a voice.