

1997/62. Science and technology for development

The Economic and Social Council,

Recognizing, without prejudice to the ongoing review being undertaken on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996 with regard to its subsidiary bodies, the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development as a forum for the examination of science and technology questions, for improving understanding of science and technology policies for development and for the formulation of recommendations and guidelines on science and technology matters within the United Nations system, all in relation to development,

Recognizing also that the Commission, in carrying out its work, should pay special attention to the needs and requirements of developing countries, in particular the least developed countries and landlocked and small island developing States, and that it should in addition take into consideration the relevant problems of countries with economies in transition,

Taking note with appreciation of the report of the Working Group on Information and Communication Technologies for Development of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development²³⁶ and the conclusions and recommendations contained therein,

Recognizing that the social and economic potential of information and communication technologies is enormous, and that the risks for those without the capabilities to access, design, produce and use the new products and service applications may lead to their marginalization from active participation in the global economy,

Taking note with satisfaction of the note by the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on the scientific and technological aspects of sustainable energy systems,²³⁷

Taking note with satisfaction also of the report by the Gender Advisory Board on its work,²³⁸

Noting with satisfaction that the science, technology and innovation policy reviews directed at a broad spectrum of sectors, including industry, social sectors and government itself, have started, with one review already completed, another under way and a third awaiting financing,

Taking note of the other relevant documentation submitted to the Commission for consideration at its third session,²³⁹

Noting that the fourth session of the Commission is scheduled to take place twenty years after the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, held at Vienna from 20 to 31 August 1979, and recognizing that

²³⁶ E/CN.16/1997/4.

²³⁷ See E/CN.16/1997/3.

²³⁸ See E/CN.16/1997/8, paras. 19–22.

²³⁹ E/CN.16/1997/2, E/CN.16/1997/5 and E/CN.16/1997/7; E/CN.16/1997/CRP.1–5; and E/CN.16/1997/Misc.1–5.

there is a need to define a new vision and to enhance continuously the role for the United Nations system in the area of science and technology for development,

Recalling Commission decision 2/101 of 24 May 1995 on its working methods,²⁴⁰ which was ratified by the Council,

Recognizing that enhanced transparency and accountability are essential for the efficient and effective functioning of the Commission,

Welcoming the initiative taken by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in holding a World Science Conference in 1999 to strengthen the commitment of countries to scientific research and development in the service of societal progress,

ACTIVITIES TO FOLLOW UP THE EARLIER WORK OF THE COMMISSION

A. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

1. *Recommends* that all developing countries and countries with economies in transition establish a national strategy for information and communication technologies, taking into account, *inter alia*, the guidelines proposed by the Working Group on Information and Communication Technologies for Development of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development²³⁶ and that, where such strategies already exist, they could be reviewed in the light of those guidelines;

2. *Also recommends* that action be taken by national Governments to establish a task force or commission or to ensure that an existing entity is charged with the design of the national strategy for information and communication technologies;

3. *Invites* countries, in order to facilitate the exchange of experience among them at the international and regional levels, to prepare a report on their strategies for information and communication technologies for the next session of the Commission, to be held in 1999, and stresses that the reports should include the priorities of each national strategy, the mechanisms for updating and the procedures for implementing the strategy and that, to enhance the value of the reports, consideration might be given to the organization of workshops, all of which should be financed from extrabudgetary resources;

4. *Invites* relevant bodies of the United Nations system to assess their capability to provide assistance and promote cooperation in the area of information and communication technologies and to suggest areas in which they are best able to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the design and implementation of their national strategies for information and communication technologies;

5. *Requests* the secretariat of the Commission to synthesize the results of those assessments and to hold an inter-agency meeting within existing resources in cooperation with the Commission to review that synthesis;

²⁴⁰ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1995, Supplement No. 11 (E/1995/31)*, chap. I, sect. C.

6. *Invites* Governments, the public and business sectors, academia and non-governmental organizations in industrialized countries to engage in technological cooperation activities with their counterparts in developing countries and countries with economies in transition in order to facilitate their access to and encourage the use, production and development of information and communication technologies and to ensure their effective participation in building the global information infrastructure;

7. *Requests* the Commission to identify an independent institute to prepare a study, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources, for the next session of the Commission on new forms of resource generation, focusing on information and communication technologies that might support social and economic development priorities;

B. SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION POLICY REVIEWS

8. *Decides* that the Commission shall organize a workshop comparing experiences in science, technology and innovation policy or similar reviews in developing countries and countries with economies in transition in order to stimulate a learning process in those innovative efforts, subject to the availability of extrabudgetary resources;

9. *Recommends* the continuation of cooperation between the Commission and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on science, technology and information policy reviews;

C. COMMON VISION OF THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

10. *Recommends* that the Commission, in the form of expert group meetings, carry out a programme of preparation, as outlined in the report of the meeting of the preparatory working group on that subject, held at Geneva on 20 and 21 December 1996,²⁴¹ taking into account regional inputs;

D. GENDER ADVISORY BOARD

11. *Requests* the Gender Advisory Board to continue its work as reported,²³⁸ in collaboration with all relevant organizations, in particular those within the United Nations system;

E. NEW SUBSTANTIVE THEME AND OTHER ACTIVITIES

12. *Decides* that the substantive theme for the inter-sessional period 1997–1999 shall be “Science and technology partnerships and networking for national capacity-building” and that the theme shall include North-South as well as South-South partnerships and networks involving, *inter alia*, enterprises, educational bodies, research institutions, governmental science and technology departments and other actors in the field of science and technology, with particular attention to be paid to biotechnology and energy;

13. *Also decides* to hold a panel meeting on biotechnology and its impact on development, bringing together country experts and experts from relevant institutions and United Nations agencies working on that subject, in order to identify critical issues relevant to development that are not sufficiently covered by existing forums, with particular

attention to food production, and to recommend how further work on those issues might be undertaken;

F. BUDGET AND INTER-SESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

14. *Recommends* that at future sessions of the Commission, the report on the budget and inter-sessional activities of the Commission be considered under a separate agenda item;

G. COORDINATION OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

15. *Decides* that the secretariat of the Commission shall be requested to study the possibility of setting up, in collaboration with other United Nations bodies, including the regional commissions, an electronic network on their activities in science and technology for development, making that network widely accessible to science and technology institutes around the world;

16. *Also decides* that, in order to promote better interaction with United Nations bodies, especially the regional commissions, the Commission shall give consideration to including suitably qualified members of those bodies in the working groups of the Commission and that, in addition, meetings of the working groups of the Commission might be held in the offices of the regional commissions, whenever possible;

H. COALITION OF RESOURCES

17. *Recommends* that a workshop be convened by the Commission to provide a forum for coalition of resources, in particular in relation to information and communication technologies.

*42nd plenary meeting
25 July 1997*

²⁴¹ See E/CN.16/1997/CRP.2.