

## ECOSOC Resolution 2001/31

### Science and technology for development

*The Economic and Social Council,*

*Recognizing* the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development as a forum for improving the understanding of science and technology issues and for the formulation of recommendations and guidelines on science and technology matters within the United Nations system on all science and technology related matters,

*Reaffirming* the need to enhance the capability of United Nations organizations active in science and technology, in particular of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to effectively address emerging issues in science and technology,

*Recognizing* the vital role of new and innovative technologies in raising productivity and competitiveness of nations and the need, inter alia, for policy guidance and for measures promoting public awareness of science and technology and the transfer and diffusion of such technologies to developing countries,

*Taking note with appreciation* of the Secretary-General's synthesis report on the Commission on Science and Technology for Development panels on national capacity-building in biotechnology,<sup>1</sup> the comprehensive note prepared by the secretariat on the implementation and progress made on decisions taken at the fourth session of the Commission,<sup>2</sup> the note by the secretariat on the budget and inter-sessional activities of the Commission,<sup>3</sup> the note by the secretariat on activities of the Commission regarding the coordination of science and technology for development and other inter-sessional activities within the United Nations system, including the outcome of the World Science Conference<sup>4</sup> and other relevant documentation submitted to the Commission for consideration at its fifth session,<sup>5</sup>

*Welcoming* the establishment by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development of the Science and Technology for Development Network,<sup>6</sup> which provides information on science and technology activities and programmes within the United Nations system and among intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and builds awareness of scientific and technological developments that are particularly important for developing countries and countries with economies in transition,

*Taking note of* the Plan of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development at its tenth session, held at Bangkok from 12 to 19 February 2000,<sup>7</sup> which noted, inter alia, the

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<sup>1</sup> E/CN.16/2001/2.

<sup>2</sup> E/CN.16/2001/3.

<sup>3</sup> E/CN.16/2001/4.

<sup>4</sup> E/CN.16/2001/5.

<sup>5</sup> E/CN.16/2001/Misc.1-8.

<sup>6</sup> Web site: [unctad.org/stdev](http://unctad.org/stdev).

<sup>7</sup> TD/390, part II.

widening technology gap between developed and developing countries and stressed the need to promote greater access, transfer and diffusion of technology to developing countries in order to strengthen competitiveness based on the innovative capacities of enterprises in these countries,

*Recalling* key proposals on science and technology contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted on 8 September 2000 by the Heads of State and Government on the occasion of the Millennium Summit<sup>8</sup> and the declaration adopted at the Summit Conference of the Group of Eight industrialized countries, held in Okinawa from 19 to 24 July 2000,

*Recalling also* the Havana Programme of Action adopted by the Group of 77 and China at the South Summit held in Havana from 10 to 14 April 2000,<sup>9</sup> which noted with concern the threat of increasing technological marginalization of the South and decided to make science and technology a priority item on the national agenda as well as in the area of South-South cooperation,

*Recalling further* General Assembly resolution 55/185, which called upon the Secretary-General to strengthen the Commission and its secretariat within the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development by providing it with the necessary resources to enable it to carry out its mandate of assisting the developing countries with their national development efforts in the field of science and technology in an optimal manner.

## **Activities as follow-up to the earlier work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development**

### **A. National capacity-building in biotechnology**

*Recognizing* that biotechnology has an outstanding potential to support national efforts towards food security, health, environmental sustainability and increased competitiveness,

*Realizing* that modern biotechnology may be associated with new risks and unexpected impacts on health and the environment and that it raises a number of socio-economic and ethical concerns with regard to gene manipulation, in particular, human genes, and needs to be used and managed taking into account the precautionary approach contained in principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,<sup>10</sup>

*Realizing also* that many developing countries cannot easily access modern biotechnologies and that their transfer, absorption and protection are necessary to ensure the benefits mentioned above,

*Bearing in mind* that many developing countries cannot adequately protect their traditional knowledge and biological resources

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<sup>8</sup> See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

<sup>9</sup> A/55/74, annex II.

<sup>10</sup> *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publications, Sales No. 93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex I.

and that their protection is also necessary to ensure the benefits mentioned above,

*Cognizant* that there is a close relationship between the development and transfer of biotechnologies and adequacy of the information and communications technology infrastructure to facilitate access to information on recent advances,

*Taking into account* the work of its three panels on biotechnology and the agreed recommendations on the sustainable use of biological resources of the Commission on Trade in Goods and Services and Commodities of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development,

*Aware* of the work under the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety of May 2000, to the Convention on Biological Diversity<sup>11</sup> and the enabling activities of the United Nations Environment Programme and the Global Environmental Facility,

1. *Decides* to recommend the following actions for consideration by Governments, the international community and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in order to assist developing countries, in particular least developed countries, and countries with economies in transition to strengthen their indigenous capacity to produce, promote, monitor, assess, manage, and regulate biotechnology:

1. Governments are encouraged to undertake the following actions in order to establish integrated, consistent policy regimes supporting development in biotechnology:
  - (a) Coordinate their national policies in education, science and technology, health, environment and agriculture, taking into account biotechnology-driven priorities and needs, also, where appropriate, at the regional level;
  - (b) Mobilize and leverage public funding and encourage private sector funding for building scientific capacities and all related infrastructures;
  - (c) Create the necessary conditions for the creation and assimilation of scientific and technological know-how;
  - (d) Support centres of excellence and networks of key institutions in order to develop and retain national capacity while harnessing the expertise of nationals based overseas;
  - (e) Ensure that the biotechnology sector is included in the relevant national capacity needs assessments and subsequent strategies and that action plans are developed;

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<sup>11</sup> A/AC.237/18 (Part II)/Add.1 and Corr.1, annex I.

- (f) Ensure that there is a vehicle, such as a focal point or national commission for coordination and enhancement of activities, including national capacity needs assessments and national capacity-building;
2. The international community is invited to:
- (a) Coordinate efforts to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition to engage in capacity-building, to establish and strengthen the necessary legal and regulatory regimes for biotechnology and to access relevant information and obtain and apply modern biotechnologies suited to its needs;
  - (b) Foster information exchange and networking, including through public-private sector partnerships involving government, academia and private enterprise;
  - (c) Assist the national authorities of developing countries, including focal points/commissions in formulating frameworks for legal and regulatory regimes for managing and regulating biotechnology, and assist in the implementation of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety to the Convention on Biological Diversity;<sup>12</sup>
  - (d) Assist the national authorities of developing countries, and institutions within the United Nations system, including the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to undertake national capacity needs assessments as well as the above-mentioned tasks;
3. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, within its mandate, as defined in the Plan of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development at its tenth session,<sup>13</sup> is requested to:
- (a) Coordinate and liaise, in its work on biotechnology, with other international organizations working in biotechnology, inter alia, the United Nations regional economic and social commissions;
  - (b) Use its newly created electronic network for science and technology to make available information on legal and regulatory frameworks to national authorities, as well as other relevant balanced information on developments in biotechnology to policy makers and diplomats,

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> TD/390, part II, paras. 106, 117, 121 and 147.

the public, non-governmental organizations, journalists and the private-business sector;

- (c) Assist the developing countries, in particular least developed countries, to develop strategies and national plans, including through the undertaking of national capacity needs assessments, using extrabudgetary resources;
- (d) Develop special programmes and organize workshops, using extrabudgetary resources, to contribute to ongoing programmes for training scientists, diplomats and journalists in science and technology diplomacy, policy formulation and regulatory matters to assist developing countries, in particular least developed countries, in international negotiations and international norms and standard-setting;
- (e) Initiate or contribute to studies on the specific problems faced by developing countries in the areas of technology transfer, capacity-building, regulation and biosafety using extrabudgetary resources;
- (f) Collaborate with the Bureau of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to ensure the implementation of its recommendations, including mobilization of extrabudgetary funds;

2. *Requests* the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, within its mandate as coordinator of the science and technology activities in the United Nations system, to:

(a) Encourage the national authorities in charge of science and technology, and when appropriate at regional level, to coordinate their strategies, and to provide substantive support in this regard;

(b) Propose concrete guidelines to facilitate development of, access to and dissemination of information, new technologies and technology-based products on affordable terms, including preferential terms;

(c) Encourage partnerships among interested parties, including through international cooperation.

#### **B. New substantive theme and other activities**

*Recalling* the ministerial declaration adopted by the Council at its substantive session of 2000,<sup>14</sup> in which the Council stressed the central role of information and communication technologies in creating a global knowledge-based economy, in accelerating growth, raising competitiveness, promoting sustainable development, eradicating

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<sup>14</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 3 (A/55/3/Rev.1)*, chap. III, para. 17.

poverty and facilitating the effective integration of all countries into the global economy,

*Recognizing* that information and communication technologies present opportunities and challenges and can lead to a further widening of disparities between and within countries,

*Heeding the call* of the Council in the above-mentioned ministerial declaration for members of the international community to work cooperatively to bridge the digital divide and to foster “digital opportunity”,

*Recalling* resolution 1/1 of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development,<sup>15</sup>

*Also recalling* the inter-sessional programme of work of the Commission for 1997-1999 on information and communication technology and its publication *Knowledge Societies: Information Technology for Sustainable Development*,<sup>16</sup> as well as its guidelines for national information and communication technology strategies and its conclusions drawn from twenty-nine different coalitions of resources regarding infrastructure and applications of information and communication technologies, remembering its conclusion that, although the cost of using information and communication technologies is still high, the cost of not doing so is likely to be even higher,

*Recognizing* that the competitiveness of a nation depends on the productivity of its enterprises and that their productivity depends in large measure on investment in new technologies, such as information and communication technologies and access to information available through the Internet,

1. *Decides* to follow up its work on information and communication technologies through its Bureau or, if necessary, through the creation of a subcommittee of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development:

(a) To ensure that its previous findings and recommendations are brought to the attention of the main players in bridging the digital divide, such as the Task Force on Information and Communication Technologies, the digital opportunity task force of the Group of Eight and the task force on information and communication technology of the Group of Fifteen;

(b) To assist in the implementation of the outcome of the review by the Council of the mandates and activities of its subsidiary bodies dealing with information and communication technology with a view to establishing modalities to provide the United Nations and Governments with comprehensive, practical and action-oriented advice on policies and programmes and on new developments in the field of information and communication technology;

(c) To oversee the inclusion of such information in the new Science and Technology for Development Network and strengthen

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<sup>15</sup> *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 11* (E/1993/31), chap. I, sect. C.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.GV.98.O.11.

information technology networks at the regional, subregional and interregional levels by linking them with the newly established network;

2. *Calls upon* the Commission and its secretariat to interact closely with the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force in order to promote greater information exchange and coordination of activities in information and communication technologies. Such interaction should include participation of the secretariat in all the meetings of the Task Force and reporting back to the Commission on the outcome of those meetings;

3. *Decides* to choose, as the substantive theme for the inter-sessional period 2001-2003, the theme “Technology development and capacity-building for competitiveness in a digital society”. It is expected that the work of the Commission during the above-mentioned period will be carried out in a multidisciplinary manner, with a synergistic view to scientific and technological, economic and commercial, as well as ethical, social and educational aspects.

### **C. Coordination of science and technology for development in the United Nations system**

*Requests* the secretariat of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to continue its efforts to use the newly established Science and Technology for Development Network as a gateway to disseminate information on activities on science and technology for development and to update information on scientific and technological developments that are particularly important for developing countries.

*43rd plenary meeting  
26 July 2001*