

**Statement by Rubens Ricupero, Secretary-General of United Nations  
Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**

**Commission on Science & Technology for Development, 8th Session**

**Geneva**

**23 May 2005**

Mr. Chairman,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Commission members,  
Distinguished experts,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the eighth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. I especially welcome the distinguished invited experts, who include Nobel laureates and ministers. The presence of both academics and policy makers will greatly contribute to your deliberations and work. I thank the Chair, Professor Bernd Michael Rode, for leading the intersessional work programme of the Commission. I welcome the newly elected members of the Commission: Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Italy, Jordan, Oman, Pakistan, Peru and the United Kingdom. May I also take this opportunity to thank those members whose term expired last year for their contributions to this body - namely, Algeria, Cameroon, Ghana, Grenada, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Spain.

Mr. Chairman,

The follow-up to the Millennium Summit, which will be the subject of a special session of the General Assembly in September, has dominated the work of the United Nations throughout the last year. The CSTD has made a special effort to relate directly to this process by examining the interface of science and technology with the Millennium Development Goals. The Commission's work will thus underpin the renewed attention of the international community to the role of science, technology and innovation policy, and to the need to devote adequate resources, both public and private, to science, technology and innovation. The report of the United Nations Secretary-General, *In Larger Freedom*, accordingly calls for more coherent national development strategies, for the establishment of scientific advisory bodies in each country, for various initiatives in learning and for better public administration. The Millennium Project Report makes a case for public investment more generally, including investment in science, technology and innovation; and science advisors to Governments are one of the "quick wins" proposed explicitly. The report of the UN's Task Force on Science, Technology and Innovation highlighted the need for "creating space for policy experimentation and learning" and for policy diversity; this matches the reference to the need for appropriate balance between national policy space and international disciplines and commitments contained in the Saõ Paulo Consensus adopted at UNCTAD XI last year. In the Millennium agenda, targets 12, 17 and 18 of MDG 8 relate directly to science and technology.

Mr. Chairman,

The socioeconomic benefits of modern science and technology have not reached all countries and peoples. It is obviously not the lack of technology or technological innovation per se that prevents countries from fully leveraging this vehicle for socioeconomic progress and development; rather, it is the lack of national capacity to harness each country's potential. At present, 15 per cent of the world population provides nearly all of global technology innovation, but only half the world's population is able to adopt these technologies in such a way as to enhance production and consumption - preconditions for overcoming poverty and marginalization. The other half is technologically disconnected. This gap between leaders and laggards - the technology divide - must be narrowed for longer-term sustainable and equitable development.

The MDGs cannot be achieved without scientific knowledge and technological tools. The goal of halving the number of people whose income is less than one dollar a day, and halving the number who suffer from hunger, calls for modern agriculture and agro-industrial machinery, as well as the capacity to produce higher value-added commodities, which translates into higher economic returns. Poverty eradication drives and is driven by the other MDGs - namely, universal primary education, gender equality, health, environmental sustainability and a global partnership for development. At the country level, achieving the MDGs requires a reorientation of national science, technology and innovation policies to ensure that they serve the needs of development effectively and coherently. In particular, meeting the MDGs will mean building a solid national science and technology base to enable the generation, utilization and diffusion of this knowledge. Public-private partnerships involving all stakeholders are essential in building scientific and technological capabilities. At the international level, access to new and emerging technologies is crucial and requires technology transfer cooperation and scientific and technological capacity-building for effective participation in the development process of both the private and public sectors.

Mr. Chairman,

As the lead entity for technology-related issues within the UN system, UNCTAD has a broad mandate to advance understanding of the role of science, technology and innovation in trade and development. For us, STI is a cross-cutting issue, one to which all our divisions contribute within their respective mandates and fields of expertise. In the area of policy debate and consensus-building, for example, UNCTAD's work on TRIPS and GATS analyses the impact of rule-making on STI in such areas as TRIPS and access to medicines, and GATS and access to health services. Our work on IPRs includes capacity-building, such as through the recently published resource handbook on TRIPS and development. The UNCTAD science, technology and innovation policy reviews contribute to policy debates. The World Investment Report 2005 will address the nexus of research and development and foreign direct investment. Other UNCTAD publications have examined the digital divide and proposed policy measures to address it. Our annual e-commerce report and its successor, the Information Economy Report, whose first edition will appear this November, are a means to look specifically at information technology as a tool for STI. Bringing

together trade, investment, technology and related issues with the MDGs, UNCTAD thus has come to serve as a think tank for science, technology and innovation.

UNCTAD's technical cooperation work includes projects on traditional knowledge and biotrade. UNCTAD has developed databases and Internet-based access to finance, an e-tourism platform and a project on capacity-building for policy-making on the promotion and application of science and technology to meet the MDGs. The project, to be financed from the UN Development Account, is intended to help developing countries, in particular the least developed ones, to identify appropriate policies and measures for integrating science and technology into national development strategies and ensure that they serve as effective tools for meeting the MDGs. The project's specific mission is therefore to enable high-level government policy makers to incorporate science and technology into their national development policies. We would also like to reinforce this policy advisory role with a particular focus on capacity-building for STI policy in Africa.

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies, distinguished Commission members, distinguished experts, ladies and gentlemen,

The Commission on Science and Technology for Development has undertaken pioneering work and triggered policy debate on knowledge societies, biotechnology and ICTs. I trust this year's session will continue to galvanize action on STI, by addressing the interaction of science and technology with infrastructure-building as a foundation for science and technology development, employment generation and enterprise development.

Let me assure you of the UNCTAD secretariat's full support to the Commission in this ambitious endeavour. I extend to you my best wishes for a successful session and look forward to its outcome, which will no doubt contribute greatly to the broader policy debates within the United Nations system.