

**Statement by Ambassador Bagher Asadi, Chairman of the Group of 77 (Islamic Republic of Iran) at the Second Committee on Agenda Item 95(C): Macroeconomic Policy Questions: Science and Technology for Development**

**New York, 3 October 2001**

Mr. Chairman,

Science and technological development are amongst the critical determinants of economic growth and sustainable development. There is considerable concentration of knowledge and the technologies deriving from it in a limited number of countries, while the majority of the world population still live in poverty and many have not yet reaped the full benefits of science and technological achievements. Technology is advancing at a very rapid pace, thus providing an immense potential for development through leapfrogging stages of technological development. However, the fact that such an immense potential is not being adequately harnessed threatens to further marginalize the economies and peoples of the majority of developing countries. The urgent necessity for the transfer of technology and innovative ways to put this potential at the service of development for all should form the work of the United Nations in the area of science and technology for development.

It is indeed a matter of serious and growing concern for the Group of 77 and China that despite the Vienna Conference on Science and Technology, the Bangkok Plan of Action and the Havana Programme of Action, technology for development issues appear to receive a rather low priority in the United Nations system. In this regard, we would like to highlight the strategic importance of this matter for the development of our countries, as well as underline the responsibility of the whole international community towards the realization of the relevant goals and objectives, as enunciated in the final document of the South Summit. On that occasion, the Heads of States and Government of the developing world expressed their concern on the technology gap between developed and developing countries. This unfortunate situation has as a consequence led to an increasing income gap between poor and rich countries. Worse still, this gap is likely to increase further if developing countries cannot become actively involved in developing those new industries based on the application of knowledge and technology. Our Heads of States also stressed with concern that the role of the United Nations - which had been given the mandate for the implementation of the 1979 Vienna Conference on Science and Technology - has been progressively marginalized over the years. This situation is inadmissible, but also unsustainable.

Mr. Chairman,

With this picture in mind, the South Summit emphasized the need for the creation of enduring international environment to ensure the South's access to knowledge and technology and promote the United Nations central role in removing different barriers faced by the South in the acquisition of knowledge and technology. The Group of 77 and China urges the United Nations to focus the system's work on issues central to the transfer of technology and the building of domestic technology supply capacity, with a view to promoting the competitiveness of developing countries.

Within this framework, and taking into account the report of the Commission on Science and Technology as well as the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/56/96, the Group of 77, guided by the Havana Programme of Action, fully endorses the decision of the CSTD to meet annually and supports the establishment of an open-ended working group for the purpose of analyzing ways and means to improve the role and participation of the UNCSTD in the recommendation and policy-making process of the United Nations system on Science and Technology for Development. Moreover, we believe that the CSTD should formulate proposals to ensure that the TRIPS agreement serves to promote the development of developing

countries, including the possibility for a code of conduct for all countries which facilitate the access to, dissemination and transfer of technologies on concessional and preferential terms from developed to developing countries.

With due consideration for the existing efforts, the Group of 77 and China would also like to support the feasibility study on the establishment of an international mechanism, within the Commission on Science and Technology, for research and development with a view to promoting research in areas of critical importance to the developing countries, especially in the field of health and agriculture. Needless to say, such a research should be carried out in the developing countries and its outcome should remain in the public domain and be freely accessible to the developing countries.

Mr. Chairman,

UNCTAD, the focal point on science and technology-related issues in the UN system, has a clear mandate to address issues related to technology. This mandate became even broader when the organization started to provide substantive services to the CSTD in 1993, helping it to coordinate the activities in the area of science and technology for development within the UN system. The overall developmental nature of UNCTAD requires a strong science and technology dimension in its core programmes. We wish to thank UNCTAD for the initiative to establish the Science and Technology for Development Network (STDN), which provides very useful and comprehensive information on science and technologies activities and programmes within the UN system and elsewhere, and helps build awareness of scientific and technological developments that are particularly important for developing countries.

Given the fact the Group of 77 considers science and technology issues key to their strategies for economic development, the Group is very much concerned that the resources available to the United Nations system to meet the challenges faced by developing countries in designing the policies and strategies required to bridge the technology gap between the North and the South are inadequate and need to be enhanced and strengthened. In this regard, paragraph 4 of the General Assembly resolution 55/185 “calls 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, in order to enable it to carry out better its mandate of assisting the developing countries with their national development efforts in the field of science and technology”. In this context, consideration should be given to the launching of a programme involving science and technology diplomacy in the context of paragraph 166 of the Bangkok Plan of Action. The Group of 77 and China also takes note of the recent Joint Inspection Unit Report entitled “United Nations System Support for Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean”, which calls upon the United Nations to add a science and technology dimension to its core programme.

Mr. Chairman,

The necessity of enhanced UN activity in this area has become all the more important because phenomenal advances in science and technology impact on virtually all facets of life and economic activities of all countries, particularly developing countries. This is clearly reflected in the proliferation of requests and mandates for providing services in this area, including through the Bangkok Plan of Action, the ECOSOC, as well as the Havana Programme of Action. Along this line, we would like to encourage the contribution of CSTD to the preparatory processes of forthcoming conferences, particularly the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the World Summit on the Information Society, as well as to the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. We also welcome the outcome of the this year’s substantive session of ECOSOC where the Council stressed – in the Agreed Conclusions of Coordination Segment - that the newly established ICT Task Force should build upon the expertise that already exists within the United Nations system, including, in particular, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and its work. The Council also requested the Secretary-General to bring the Commission on Science and Technology

for Development into the system-wide coordination regarding information and communication technologies.

We are all aware of the Commission's good work. It has already documented over 29 information technology projects. It has also selected "Technology development and capacity building for competitiveness in a digital society" as its main theme during the inter-sessional period 2001-2003. This theme would encompass the transfer, absorption and development of information and communication technologies to improve the competitiveness of enterprises. The work of the Commission under this theme, in particular, and its achievements in the area of information and communication technologies, in general, will definitely contribute to the ICT Task Force, including in bridging the digital divide.

Notwithstanding these achievements, the Commission has continuously suffered from the lack of adequate resources to finance and further promote its activities. We believe that urgent action should be taken for provision of extra budgetary resources to strengthen the CSTD and its activities. Noting the growing importance of the work on science and technology for development to be implemented within the CSTD, we strongly recommend that a special trust fund be established within UNCTAD, with a view to assisting it in implementing various mandates it has received, and continues to receive, in the area of science and technology.

Mr. Chairman,

In conclusion, let me reiterate our readiness to work collectively with all our partners for consensus action on issues related to science and technology, in order to meet the developing countries' needs in this field. Let us work together so that the future challenges in this critical area will be faced, addressed and met on the basis of solidarity and cooperation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.