

1 June 2001

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Jorge Iván Mora Godoy, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Cuba, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, at the Fifth Session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished delegates,

The Group of 77 and China in Geneva wishes to raise their growing concern over the fact that despite the Bangkok Plan of Action and the Havana Programme of Action, technology for development issues appears to have very low priority in the United Nations system. In this regard, the G-77 and China would like to highlight the strategic importance of this matter that the South Summit established for the development of our countries, as well as, the responsibility of the whole international community to this goal.

On that occasion, the Head of States of the developing countries expressed their concern on the technology gap between developed and developing countries. This situation has provoked an important ground of the increasing income gap between poor and rich countries, and 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. Also all our Head of States stressed with deep concern that the role of the United Nations, which was given the mandate at the 1979 Vienna Conference on Science and Technology, has been progressively marginalised over the years. This situation is really inadmissible and unsustainable.

For the above-mentioned reasons the South Summit urged the need to create enduring international environment to ensure 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.

On this basis, the G-77 and China, as provided by the Programme of Action of Havana Summit, would like to propose the following:

(a) The UNCSTD should establish an open-ended working group, before the next session of the Commission, to meet for one work week during 2002 and 2003 for the purpose to analyse ways and means for improving the role and participation of the UNCSTD in the recommendation and policymaking process of the United Nations system on science and technology issues, with the aim to work towards the strengthening of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development. The Working Group should submit to the next session of the Commission concrete measures for adoption, including the possibility for the Commission to meet annually for one week and to promote the annual consideration of science and technology within the relevant committees of the United Nations. The report should also be made available to ECOSOC at its next session in July 2002;

(b) The UNCSTD should formulate proposals to ensure that the TRIPS agreement 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, and in this regard an action should be adopted by the Commission, at present session.

The Group of 77 and China would also like to propose to the Commission that, taking into account the

existing efforts, to explore the possibility of promoting the establishment of an international mechanism for research and development with a view:

- (i) to promote research in areas of critical importance to the developing countries, especially in the field of health and agriculture;
- (ii) to ensure that such a research is carried out in the developing countries; and
- (iii) to ensure that the output of such a research remain in the public domain and be freely accessible to the developing countries.

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 development-oriented nature of UNCTAD requires a strong science and technology dimension in its core programmes. To this end, UNCTAD's comprehensive mandate emanates from the General Assembly, ECOSOC as well as its quadrennial conferences, including the Bangkok Plan of Action.

Noting that the Group of 77 and China consider science and technology-issues key to their strategies for economic development, the Group of 77 and China is concerned that the resources available to the United Nations system to meet the challenges faced by developing countries in designing policies and strategies required to bridge the technology gap between the North and the South must be strengthened. In this regard the General Assembly Resolution (A/55/185, para.4) "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 also be given to the launching of a programme involving science and technology diplomacy in the context of paragraph 166 of Bangkok Plan of Action. The Group of 77 and China also take note of the recent Joint Inspection Unit Report entitled "United Nations System Support for Science and Technology in Latin America and the Caribbean" which call upon the United Nations to add a science and technology dimension to its core programmes.

This is all the more important because the phenomenal advances in science and technology impact on virtually all facets of life and economic activities of all countries, particularly developing countries. This is reflected in the proliferation of requests and mandates for providing services in this area, including through the Bangkok Plan of Action, ECOSOC mandate as well as the South Summit Havana Programme of Action. In the light of this, the Group of 77 and China urge the CSTD and the secretariat to focus their work on issues central to transfer of technology and the building technology supply capacity, with a view towards promoting the competitiveness of developing countries. The Commission has continuously suffered from the lack of adequate resources to finance and further promote its activities. The Group of 77 and China would like to urge the CSTD to actively seek extra budgetary resources to strengthen the CSTD and its activities.

The Group of 77 and China 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 builds awareness of scientific and technological developments that are particularly important for developing countries.

The Group of 77 and China would like to express their readiness to work together for consensus action of the Commission, in order to meet the developing countries' needs in this field, with the assurances that the world community will be able to face the present and future challenges, on the basis of solidarity and cooperation.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

G-77 Geneva Chapter

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