2013 ECOSOC High-level Segment

Policy messages from Annual Ministerial Review
Regional Discussions

Monday, 1 July 2013, 12:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland

Remarks for H.E. Mr. Néstor Osorio, President, ECOSOC

It is a great honour for me to Chair this Ministerial Round Table discussion, a first of its kind, to reflect on specific regional issues and dimensions related to the AMR theme this year.

I would like to thank the Ministers that are joining us today to share their thoughts and experiences, as well as our moderator, Mr. Richard Manning from the Institute for Development Studies for moderating the session.

Our objective today is to focus on regional experiences and good practices in promoting science, technology and innovation – and culture – for sustainable development with a view to identify common policy messages.

Regional consultations were held in five regions– namely Western Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, Africa, and Europe – and addressed various dimensions of the 2013 AMR theme, which regional stakeholders deemed most pertinent to their specific circumstances.

During these consultations, regional actors reflected on the potential of STI in addressing long standing sustainable development challenges in their respective regions - in areas such as health, education, food security, environmental sustainability, and economic growth. They also highlighted specific constraints that they face to use these tools most effectively to overcome these challenges as well as good practices and lessons learned that can potentially be shared more widely.

Some important common messages have emerged from these experiences as well as some important insights on how regional approaches and global partnership on science, technology and innovation can be applied more effectively at the regional and country level to promote sustainable development.

Let me take this opportunity to highlight some of these messages that would be useful to take into account in our debate this morning.

A broad consensus has emerged on the potential for STI to offer new and innovative solutions to address the interconnected challenges of sustainable development, such as climate change, energy and food insecurity, unemployment, etc. just to mention a few. Harnessing this full potential, however, requires appropriate national policy frameworks, infrastructure, institutions and human resources capacity to access and absorb existing technologies and innovations relevant to each country's developmental stage.

The presence of these elements varies widely within and across regions and even within countries, which calls for regional and even global approaches to promote and facilitate a broader use and dissemination of STI applications to achieve sustainable development and achieve the MDGs.

Building and nurturing innovative societies indeed requires awareness and commitment from all levels of society so that everyone can achieve their potential and contribute to the well being of all.

National policies and approaches are critical. The role of government, in particular, is essential to create awareness and establish the right set of incentives for all relevant actors in the innovation value chain by creating an enabling environment, or innovation ecosystem, that encourages and facilitates the use of innovation to promote social inclusion and sustainable development

Regional and global approaches, on the other hand, are critical to facilitate access and transfer of knowledge and technology and help countries build their capacity to innovate. Such approaches are also becoming increasingly critical to remove regulatory and financial barriers to innovation as well as to devise effective solutions to common challenges, such as accessibility, affordability, and sustainability of existing technologies that many countries still face.

Broad-based access to the benefits of STI thus calls for strong regional and global partnerships and networks to promote the use and dissemination of scientific knowledge and technology for sustainable development both at the national and regional levels. Regional knowledge networks, for example, are increasingly recognized as important components of national innovation systems as they can significantly contribute to enhance capacities and financial incentives towards innovation-based economies.

Harnessing expertise and lessons learned by individual countries within and across regions is an important step to understand the unique challenges of each region and discuss how they can be addressed in a concerted manner.

It is also an important opportunity to identify and share specific strategies and approaches already adopted by various regions in this regard that could be shared more widely.

I look forward to a lively interactive discussion on these issues.