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**ECOSOC Civil Society Forum
“Building Public-Private Partnerships for Education through Science,
Technology and Innovation”**

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Excellencies,
Distinguished Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure to address this important Forum on behalf of the Economic and Social Council. At the outset, I wish to thank the organizers for this opportunity to discuss with this panel the issues of partnerships, innovation and education. I would like to thank all panelists and participants for their interest in the work of the United Nations Economic and Social.

Innovation is essential to our modern society. Innovation helps to create healthy, educated or inclusive societies. Innovation is at the core of the three pillars of sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals.

This is why the 2013 Annual Ministerial Review of ECOSOC will build on the Council's past work, including the Ministerial Declaration on “Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education” adopted in 2011, and bring the spotlight on how to harness the power and potential of

science, technology and innovation (STI), as well as culture, to achieve the MDGs and promote sustainable development.

We are here to take stock of the progress Governments, NGOs, the private sector and academia have made in education and innovation, and discuss the challenges you face, with the aim to maximize the benefits of education and innovation for sustainable development for all.

Today, our societies require a change in the way we think about future development. The Rio+20 Outcome *The Future We Want* emphasized that economic growth must be compatible with the well-being of present and future generations.

ECOSOC will play a key role in promoting sustainable development through a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions. Education, science, technology and innovation were identified as important elements of viable long-term solutions to sustainable development challenges.

Governments and international organizations need broad based and inclusive partnerships to achieve these tasks.

Human skills and innovation remain the most powerful force for improving prosperity over the long-run.

- Education and innovation are powerful drivers for poverty reduction and sustainable socio economic development.
- They empower people with knowledge and skills they need to increase individual and household incomes, expand employment opportunities, and fight against hunger and malnutrition.

- Better educated workers are more productive and the accumulation of knowledge increases the rate of technological change and innovation thus accelerating economic growth.
- Education and innovation empower women and girls and are often the single best investment available to resource poor countries. For each extra year of education, deaths of infants and deaths of mothers are reduced.
- Education and innovation contribute to the strengthening of civil society, to national capacity and to good governance.

Investment in education and innovation are essentials for human development. We shall learn today many lessons from our distinguished panelists from Brazil, Korea, Uruguay, United States and other countries.

There has been important improvement in the lives of poor people as a result of education and innovation. Consider the educational levels in many countries which have evolved significantly. The percentage of adult illiterates in the world has declined steadily. Since the turn of the century the number of children who have received education has increased by around 40 million. The innovation of technology has brought new learning opportunities to millions.

Despite the remarkable progress made, there are a number of challenges. For many people, the risk of being excluded from fast sustainable economic growth remains. A yawning digital divide exists between those who have access to new technology and those who have not. And more than 67 million school-age children most of them girls are not attending school. These millions of children are being denied a fundamental human right.

In the near future we need to bring innovation to the education of most needed to bridge the gaps of our marginalized population. There are no simple solutions in the quest for education for all.

There is need to build more schools, improve connectivity and infrastructure, provide access to on line courses and digital libraries or provide computers or laptops.

The quality of education should be improved at all levels of education. We need to retrain teachers and equip them with innovative educational technologies.

Greater efforts are needed to build stronger partnerships among governments, the private sector, civil society, and academia, philanthropic organizations and other stakeholders to promote and spread innovation and create a friendly environment for education for all to bring about sustainable development.

For over 60 years, ECOSOC has been serving as an important interface between policymakers and civil society, including the scientific community, for countries to voice their concerns. The Council brings together Member States to collectively take innovative and effective ways to meet specific challenges. ECOSOC recognizes the critical role of innovation in pursuing sustainable development.

At ECOSOC we are making special efforts to include the civil society in its work. The *Youth Forum* joined together thousands of youngsters, both here and via electronic communication on Science, Technology, Innovation, and Culture.

The *Partnership Forum, Partnering for Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Development*, brought together diverse representatives of the civil society to

discuss how to advance in the achievement of the MDG's by leveraging Science, Technology, and Innovation.

ECOSOC will benefit from your work today. Partnerships enrich our work.

Thank you.