Regional Consultation Meeting on Science, Technology and Innovation for Promoting Renewable Energy Technologies for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific in support of the 2013 ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review

Organized in Cooperation with the UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT FOR ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (UNDESA) & ESCAP TRADE AND INVESTMENT DIVISION ASIAN AND PACIFIC CENTRE FOR TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY (APCTT)

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Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an immense pleasure to address this distinguished gathering and to welcome you to the Regional Consultation Meeting on Science, Technology and Innovation for Promoting Renewable Energy Technologies for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific organized by ESCAP in close cooperation with the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) of ESCAP.

One of the major issues of the present day that affects each and every country's competitiveness and development is energy. Access to clean, affordable energy is critical for achieving socio-economic development by countries. The lack of effective energy access has implications for achieving universal health, education and income growth and is therefore considered a major obstacle to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The importance of sustainable energy to the region and to the world cannot be understated. The path to continuing economic and social growth is flanked by two huge challenges – one, to meet an ever-increasing demand for energy; and two, how to deliver this energy with a lower

environmental impact. Increasing the use of renewable energy, along with greater energy efficiency will be major part of winning this challenge.

The generation and consumption of renewable energy has been growing rapidly in recent years. This growth has mainly been triggered by concerns on climate change, the increased cost of fossil fuels and the aspirations for increased energy security. Another major reason is the need for energy access to millions of people - mostly in developing countries - who have been deprived of this vital economic input. According to latest estimates, renewable energy accounts for an estimated 13% of global primary energy consumption.

The Outcome Document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development or Rio+20 in 2012, known as "the Future we Want" underscored energy as a priority area of sustainable development and proposes to build on the "Sustainable Energy for All" initiative launched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

The effective exploitation, utilization and commercialization of renewable energy are largely driven by science, technology and innovation (STI). STI is also required to address the challenges of ensuring energy security and sustainability. Rio+20 also recognized the importance of strengthening the scientific, technological and innovation capacities of countries through promoting effective mechanisms, enhanced means, appropriate enabling environments, and the removal of obstacles to the scaling up of the development and transfer of technology to developing countries. For that reason, STI was rightly chosen as the central theme of this year's Annual Ministerial Review.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

The ability of countries to grow their economies in a global competitive environment depends on access to sustainable energy, including renewable energy. The generation of adequate supplies of renewable energy in turn depends on countries' capacity and preparedness for innovation.

Drivers of innovation for a country could be external – such as technology transfer from other countries, or indigenous – such as advanced local R&D. In order to boost countries' capacities to foster innovation, countries need to strengthen their STI systems with a specific focus on developing people, knowledge and resources.

For instance, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) require technologies and expertise developed by universities and research institutions. Universities, in turn, need partnerships with the private sector for undertaking projects which require applied research. The private sector can assist in the commercialization of research results or scale-up innovations of universities, in addition to

partnering with them in conducting applied research. Public institutions need the critical support of academic institutions and the private sector for achieving economic as well as technological success at the national and international levels in order to remain competitive in the global market. These examples show that innovation is the result of a complex set of relationships and linkages among various actors which includes, but is not limited to, enterprises, research institutes, universities and governments as well as financial institutions, resulting in an effective national innovation system.

Distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen,

A national innovation system is a process of linking various stakeholders to foster innovation widely through the development of science and technology at the national level. However, many developing countries in the region, in particular countries with special needs face problems in meeting the competitiveness requirements of the global market due to lack of an effective national innovation system and an innovation-oriented private sector.

The Asia-Pacific region has an interesting mosaic of developed and developing countries, emerging economies as well as countries with special needs. As a result, the resource base, socio-economic patterns and structures, and consequently energy consumption profiles also differ widely among countries, with many countries increasingly realizing the need for an effective national innovation system to support the development, transfer and adoption of renewable energy. There is tremendous scope for exchange of knowledge, learning and experience with developing national innovation systems in the Asia-Pacific region.

In this context, the present regional consultation is timely and important to facilitate exchange of experiences, lessons learned and good practices between countries in the region on effective STI policies/approaches for promoting renewable energy technology innovation systems at the national level, and also identify common perspectives, priorities and solutions at the regional level. The results of this meeting will feed into the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda later this month in Bali and the global Annual Ministerial Review which will take place at the ECOSOC high-level segment in Geneva in July.

I strongly encourage all of you as key stakeholders to use this opportunity to share your views and opinions on the various topics to be discussed by this regional consultation. Your active participation and inputs are vital to ensure that this consultation produces realistic and well prioritized recommendations and that the perspectives from this important region are well represented in Geneva.

I wish you all success in your deliberations.

Thank you.