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INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR SCIENCE AND HIGH TECHNOLOGY

Report by the Director-General

Highlights the synergy and relevance of ICS activities to the UNIDO work programme, as requested by the General Conference in resolution GC.9/Res.4.

Introduction

1. In adopting resolution GC.9/Res.4 at its ninth session, the General Conference, inter alia, recognized that the main objective that motivated the establishment of the International Centre for Science and High Technology (ICS)—the promotion of and assistance in the development, selection, transfer and use of technology in favour of developing countries and economies in transition—is still pertinent and valid. The Conference also requested the Director-General to present a report highlighting the synergy and relevance of ICS activities to the UNIDO work programme. The present document is submitted in compliance with that request, and also provides information concerning other relevant recent developments.

I. RELEVANCE OF ICS ACTIVITIES TO UNIDO WORK PROGRAMME

2. Since the ninth session of the General Conference (December 2001), ICS programmes and activities have

been gradually upgraded and focused on priority programmes of UNIDO. ICS has served as a specialized centre to UNIDO programmes providing specific technical expertise in selected sectors and implementing activities relevant to key UNIDO programmes.

3. In 2001 and 2002, ICS programmes were jointly discussed and agreed in the preparatory phase between ICS and the corresponding UNIDO branches. Such an approach has created synergy in the implementation of ICS and UNIDO programmes. This is especially evident in two ICS areas: pure and applied chemistry, and earth environmental and marine sciences and technologies. Indeed, these two areas have been implementing their programmes in tight cooperation with the Cleaner Production and Environmental Management Branch of UNIDO and a number of UNIDO field offices. Similarly, cooperation and coordination with UNIDO branches has recently improved also in high technology and new materials. Selected examples of initiatives and projects successfully promoted in all three areas are listed in the annex to the present document.

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4. In recent months, ICS programmes on technology management and business alliances have been jointly implemented and coordinated with the UNIDO Industrial Promotion and Technology Branch. Moreover, ICS has funded the UNIDO-coordinated programme on technology foresight for Latin American countries. The role of ICS was also to participate in the implementation of the portion dedicated to the information platform on technology foresight. In 2003, UNIDO and ICS have coordinated the formulation of a joint technology foresight programme in order to increase effectiveness of activities.

5. An important component of the joint strategy has been focused on project promotion as well as on awareness and capacity-building developed by ICS through a number of training courses, workshops and expert group meetings. During the period 2001-2002, more than 90 events were organized all over the world, with more than 4,000 participants (experts, technologists) from more than 90 developing countries and economies in transition. These events also served to promote common initiatives in close cooperation with UNIDO field offices (for example in China, Indonesia and Thailand).

II. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

6. In 2002, ICS started to strengthen its project-oriented strategy, focusing on the preparation and promotion of international projects.

7. In close cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Italy, ICS organized a conference at Trieste, Italy, in September 2002, with the aim of illustrating in detail and promoting the programme that is being developed by ICS. Participants included more than 50 Permanent Representatives and the UNIDO Director-General. The new project-oriented strategy, which was presented on that occasion, was supported by the Director-

General and Permanent Representatives and thereupon confirmed by the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs and the UNIDO Director-General at a bilateral meeting in February 2003.

8. A series of recently-formulated project proposals are currently under promotion, some of which have already been funded. One example is a project on novel catalytic technologies for the treatment of wastewater from agro-food and industrial production in Mediterranean countries.

9. Several developing countries have requested ICS to promote projects for the establishment of technological centres of excellence, focusing on national priority programmes and consistent with UNIDO integrated programmes. Projects for the establishment of centres in Ecuador, Philippines, Senegal and Slovakia are in an advanced stage of preparation.

III. INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE

10. In order to strengthen the new ICS project-oriented strategy, and in line with other international centres operating in Italy, ICS as proposed by the Italian Government required an improved institutional structure, through a new statute and a headquarters agreement between UNIDO and the Italian Government. A new statute, modelled on the statutes of other United Nations centres, would facilitate greater complementarity with UNIDO, while allowing ICS to better fulfil its objectives and more effectively perform its functions. A draft statute is now under discussion and will be submitted to the Member States for consideration

IV. ACTION REQUIRED OF THE BOARD

11. The Board may wish to take note of the information provided in the present document.

Annex

SELECTED EXAMPLES OF ICS-UNIDO COOPERATION

Area of pure and applied chemistry

1. ICS survey of technologies for persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) destruction efficiently used by UNIDO to promote and successfully implement GEF projects focused on demonstration studies on POPs destruction technologies;
2. Various surveys on emerging technologies elaborated by ICS successfully used in promoting important UNIDO initiatives and projects, specifically in the promotion of the UNIDO cleaner production centres programme;
3. ICS survey on oil regeneration technologies recently used by UNIDO to promote projects on remediation of oil-polluted sites;
4. Surveys on environmentally degradable plastics products and related technologies and on technologies for cleaning up polluted sites, in cooperation with the UNIDO Cleaner Production and Environmental Management Branch.

Area of earth, environmental and marine sciences and technologies

1. Training of Algerian managers and Sudanese engineers on environmental issues within the framework of UNIDO projects;
2. Support to National Cleaner Production Centres for promoting sustainability of industrial processes and cleaner technologies using advanced decision-support systems;
3. Scientific support in geographic information systems for the integrated coastal zone management programme in the UNIDO Gulf of Guinea large marine ecosystem project;

4. Scientific support in medicinal and aromatic plants regarding the UNIDO project for recovery of the Argentinian industrial sector: small and medium enterprise upgrading programme, in particular the sectoral strategy for market access and trade facilitation.

Area of high technologies and new materials

1. Mutual scientific support in implementing activities relating to new materials for low-cost housing, photovoltaic solar energy and telecommunication technologies;
2. Joint implementation of a high-tech regional programme to increase e-productivity and quality in Newly Independent States (NIS) and Central and Eastern Europe;
3. Joint involvement and technical contribution to support the Government of Uganda in developing a spatial data infrastructure.

Technology management and relevant areas

1. Senegal: Establishment of an ICS-UNIDO associated centre at Dakar—ICS technical assistance was requested by Senegal; project summary was approved by Senegalese counterpart and UNIDO field office. Project is included in phase II of UNIDO integrated programme.
2. Slovakia—ICS technical assistance was requested by Ministry of Environment to promote project on establishment of centre for sustainable technologies, which could serve as a focal point for Central and Eastern European countries.