General Assembly Consultative Workshops on:
**"Development, transfer and dissemination of clean
and environmentally sound technologies in developing countries"**
Workshops 1 and 2
Technology needs of developing countries and options to address them
30 April and 1 May 2013

Remarks by Mr. Wu Hongbo
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Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very much heartened by the opening statement of the Chair. These events are indeed meant as an opportunity for interactive debate amongst member states, Major Groups, and UN System representatives, supported by evidence and proposals presented by the distinguished panels of experts that have been put together.

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has been privileged to work closely with the Office of the President of the General Assembly, which is convening these events. And we too look forward to updating our knowledge and understanding on clean and environmentally sound technology issues through our deliberations in these Workshops.

These first two workshops – today and tomorrow – aim primarily to gather evidence and views from experts from academic, practitioner or other stakeholder communities, to inform discussions among Member States of technology needs of developing countries and options to address them.

The next two workshops, to be held on 30 and 31 May, will focus on international technological capacity building initiatives, looking at successful examples as well as shortcomings, and options – including that of a technology facilitation mechanism – for enhancing the development, transfer and dissemination of clean and environmentally sound technologies to developing countries.

In particular, Workshop 3 will provide an opportunity for international organisations to present and discuss their activities, achievements and needs in the area of technological capacity building and technology development, transfer and dissemination more broadly

Today, workshop 1will address science and technology needs and options for poverty eradication and sustainable development, focusing first on the case of agriculture and then moving on to energy and, in particular, renewable energy technologies in the afternoon.. Tomorrow, in Workshop 2, we will discuss and share views on successful models for clean and environmentally sound innovation and technology diffusion in developing countries, and forms of international cooperation to foster innovation and technology diffusion for sustainable development.

In all four of the Workshops, but especially in the first two, our aspiration will be a triple one. First to gather factual evidence and views on what is actually happening on the ground in terms of new technological capabilities arising in developing countries. In short, the success stories – however few and far between they may be. We would like to get a clear understanding on which good examples can be replicated in other

developing country situations, subject to what policy reforms and institutional strengthening.

Second, what genuine difficulties and gaps developing countries continue to face in importing or generating environmentally sound technologies that they need? In what ways are global developments, not least the ongoing economic crises and malaise in developed economies, adding yet new complications to global efforts to foster technology uptake in and transfer to developing countries?

Finally, what feasible options exist for enhancement of existing and possibly development of new mechanisms to support efforts of developing countries to acquire, adapt and develop technologies to advance sustainable development? In this respect, where do the priorities lie? To be able to make good use of a particular technology transferred, a country may need to have a range of complementary capabilities, but how can international cooperation be well-targeted and prioritized to build up key capabilities in a given context? Ideally, to be innovators, countries would need to master the full continuum of capabilities from basic science to R&D to the widespread diffusion of innovation. Yet, countries are starting with very different existing capabilities, so strategies for strengthening innovation systems will differ.

It would also be important, from our point of view, to get a clearer picture of the relative importance of different facets of this issue: for example, the relative importance of barriers to affordable access to key technologies for sustainable development, versus capacity limitations to effective absorption and efficient utilization of such technologies. Proper diagnosis will be critical to identifying the most effective interventions going forward.

What does it take for countries to move from being predominantly importers and imitators of imported technologies to being genuine innovators? What lessons can other developing countries learn from the success stories? And what new technological challenges face countries as they approach the technological frontier?

How much of the technology access problem has to do with intellectual property rights, how much to lack of effective competition in technology markets, how much to other causes? We intend to have a discussion of this set of issues in a session in Workshop 3.

Last but not least, we need to take stock of the important changes that have taken place in the world economy since the first Rio Conference in 1992. Transfer of technology continues to merit discussion, but there is an ever widening space for genuine technology cooperation and collaboration, North-South as well as South-South. It would be good, I believe, if our experts could help us get a little more granularity on how industrial and technological capabilities are evolving in developing countries and what new opportunities this trend may present.

These are some of the issues and questions that are being proposed for discussion, and are also articulated in the expanded Concept Note circulated by the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

And I too look forward to what promises to be a fruitful discussion.