

## **Press Releases**

### **G77'S Ministers of Foreign Affairs Endorse New Consortium for S&T**

New York City, 22 September 2006. The Foreign Ministers of the Group of 77 and China (G77) have endorsed the creation of a Consortium on Science, Technology and Innovation for the South (COSTIS). The decision was announced at the minister's annual meeting held at the headquarters of the United Nations in New York City on 22 September.

The proposal to establish COSTIS was first made in Rio de Janeiro at the General Assembly of the Third World Network of Scientific Organizations (TWNSO) in September. TWNSO, an existing network of science ministries, research councils and science academies in the developing world, will be transformed into this new organization.

"COSTIS," says Dumasani S. Kumalo, permanent representative of South Africa to the UN and chairman of the G77, "will provide member states of the G77 with direct access to the developing world's best scientific minds. The organization could prove instrumental in placing science and technology at the centre of developing world's economic development efforts." The secretariat will be located in Trieste, Italy, and operate under the administrative umbrella of the Trieste System of international organizations.

"COSTIS represents a unique blend of political power and scientific and technical expertise," says Mohamed H.A. Hassan, executive director of the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World (TWAS). Hassan briefed the ministers in New York about the consortium. COSTIS' main focus will be to promote science-based economic development in developing countries and encourage international cooperation in science and technology. "The consortium," says Hassan, "will provide a unique platform for governmental agencies responsible for funding research and development to interact with leaders in academia and industry."

COSTIS' flagship activity will be to convene periodic South-South forums on science, technology and innovation for development that address topics of critical concern, including the development of appropriate and affordable technologies for increasing access to safe drinking water, energy, and information and communication technologies.

In addition, COSTIS plans to support the creation of scientific centres of excellence; promote the sharing of innovative experiences and best practices in the use of science and technology; and encourage efforts to increase scientific cooperation through international exchange programmes and joint research projects.

"Many successful science-based economic development initiatives have been put in place in developing countries such as Brazil, China and India," says Kumalo. "As a result, we now have a great deal to learn from one another. At the same time, we do not want ignore the work of our colleagues in the North. COSTIS could serve as a valuable link between scientific and economic development communities in the developed and developing world."

"We will seek funding for our initiatives from a number of different sources," says Hassan, "including individual governments in the developing and developed worlds and international donors and foundations."

A task force has been created to prepare COSTIS's statutes and bylaws as well as a portfolio of initial programmes. Members of the task force include Dumansani Kumalo, chairman of the G77; CNR Rao, president of TWNSO; Jacob Palis, president-elect of TWAS; Mohamed H.A. Hassan, executive director of TWAS; Mourad Ahmia, executive secretary of the G77; Yiping Zhou, director of the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP) Special Unit for South-South Cooperation; Paolo Budinich, president of the Trieste International Foundation for the Progress and Freedom of Sciences (FIT); and Walter Erdelen, assistant director-general for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Representatives from the Italian government and South Africa's ministry of science and technology will also be chosen.

The task force plans to complete its work by the end of this calendar year. COSTIS is expected to be fully operational by January 2007.

For additional information about COSTIS, contact M.H.A. Hassan, TWAS executive director, Trieste, Italy; phone: +39 040 2240-328/-683; email: [mhassan@twas.org](mailto:mhassan@twas.org).

## Global Science and Technology Consortium Takes Shape

The Group of 77 (G77) and Third World Network of Scientific Organizations (TWNSO) have announced the transformation of TWNSO into the Consortium of Science, Technology and Innovation for the South (COSTIS).

Angra dos Reis, 3 September. The G77, the largest network of member states in the United Nations devoted to developing world issues, and TWNSO, an international association of developing world scientific institutions that focuses on issues related to sustainable development, have joined forces to create the 'Consortium on Science, Technology and Innovation for the South' (COSTIS). The



announcement was made at a meeting of the G77 Ministers of Science and Technology, which took place in Angra dos Reis, Brazil. The G77 meeting was held in conjunction with TWAS's 10th General Conference and TWNSO's 9th General Assembly.

The G77 has recognized the critical importance of science and technology in efforts to alleviate poverty and promote economic development for some time," says Dumisani Kumalo, president of the G77 and South Africa's representative to the United Nations. "In fact, the creation of COSTIS represents the successful culmination of a six-year process that began in Havana, Cuba, in 2000 at the first South Summit, which stressed the importance of science and technology in sustainable development. We are indeed delighted to see the creation of COSTIS, which will play an instrumental role in making science, technology and innovation an integral part of our organization."

"This is a win-win situation for TWNSO and G77," say C.N.R. Rao, president of both TWNSO and TWAS. "It will enable G77 to have direct access to a network of scientific institutions that are responsible for some of the best scientific research in the developing world. At the same time, it will allow TWNSO to work directly with the highest levels of government on scientific issues for addressing critical social and economic problems in the South. I believe that the synergism created by this partnership, which represents a unique blend of political power and technical know-how, could have a significant impact on poverty elimination and economic development efforts across the South." TWNSO plans to change its name to COSTIS and develop new statutes and bylaws.

The consortium will seek to promote scientific capacity building through scientific exchange and networking. It will also encourage the sharing of innovative experiences in the use of science and technology to address critical concerns and, more generally, seek to better integrate the scientific and policy communities through both South-South and South-North cooperation.

"The challenge for developing countries," says Mosibudi Mangena, South Africa's minister of science and technology, "is to position our economies on a path for sustainable growth that will make them preferred destinations for investments in research and development. There is a wealth of knowledge and information on international cooperation in science and technology that we can share among us," he adds. "We need to translate our experiences with a view of empowering our societies. This is the least that our people expect of us, and the Consortium for Science, Technology and Innovation that we are launching today."