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Commission on the Status of Women

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Follow-up to Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions

Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals

Note by the Secretariat

1. In its resolution 61/16 of 20 November 2006, the General Assembly adopted new working methods for the Economic and Social Council to strengthen its role as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination in the implementation of, and follow-up to, the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields. Within the framework of these new working methods, the Assembly decided that the Council should hold annual ministerial-level substantive reviews as part of its high-level segment and requested the Council to urge its functional commissions to contribute to the review. At its substantive session of 2008, the Economic and Social Council requested, inter alia, its functional commissions to contribute to the annual ministerial review, in accordance with their mandates (see Council resolution 2008/29, para. 8).

2. The theme for the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council in 2013 will be “Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals”. The present note highlights recent work of the Commission on the Status of Women that relates to that theme. The note draws from the agreed conclusions and summaries of discussions of the Commission on the Status of Women and highlights issues that can enrich the Council’s discussions and strengthen attention to gender perspectives in its deliberations and the outcomes related to the theme of the 2013 ministerial review.

3. Of specific and direct relevance to the theme for the 2013 ministerial review is the priority theme considered by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-fifth session, entitled “Access and participation of women and girls in education, training and science and technology, including for the promotion of women’s equal access to full employment and decent work”. The outcome of that



session, especially the agreed conclusions (see E/2011/27, chap. I, sect. A), included recommendations in six areas that could guide the Economic and Social Council in its work: (a) strengthening national legislation, policies and programmes; (b) expanding access and participation in education; (c) strengthening gender-sensitive quality education and training, including in the field of science and technology; (d) supporting the transition from education to full employment and decent work; (e) increasing retention and progression of women in science and technology employment; and (f) making science and technology responsive to women's needs. These areas remain pertinent and critical to any effort to enhance the contribution of science and technology to sustainable development.

4. The Commission's agreed conclusions also proposed a range of measures to ensure women's and girls' equal access to and participation in science and technology, which the Economic and Social Council may wish to consider in its deliberations on "Science, technology and innovation, and the potential of culture, for promoting sustainable development and achieving the Millennium Development Goals". These include making science education policies and curricula relevant to the needs of women and girls; promoting a positive image of careers in science and technology for women and girls; improving the retention and progression of women in science and technology; ensuring that science, technology and innovation policies address the constraints faced by women entrepreneurs; achieving equal participation of women and men in decision-making in science and technology institutions; and encouraging the use of gender-based analysis and gender impact assessments in research and development in science and technology.

5. Moderator's and Chair's summaries of the high-level round table and the interactive expert panels on the priority theme at the fifty-fifth session of the Commission also provide an important context, raise pertinent issues and offer recommendations that the Economic and Social Council could consider during the annual ministerial review (see E/2011/27 and E/CN.6/2011/CRP.3-5).

6. The report of the Secretary-General on the access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work (E/CN.6/2011/3), also covers pertinent issues that the Economic and Social Council may wish to consider. The report argues, for example, that gender equality and science and technology should not be seen as distinct issues, and that policymakers have a key role to play in integrating a gender perspective in science, technology and innovation. To harness the full potential of science and technology for development, Governments should ensure that women have equal access to science and technology knowledge and skills, that they participate equally in developing and applying knowledge, and that research content and technology development and deployment respond to the needs of both women and men. The inclusion of these perspectives for consideration by the 2013 ministerial review would strengthen the outcomes while also ensuring action to accelerate achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women, as outlined in the Millennium Development Goals.