



## UNIDOScope

weekly internet newsletter

CONTENTS 9 - 15 October, 2005:

■ ["search" as important as "research" - UNIDO project engages Civil Society Organizations as technology brokers](#)

■ [COMING SOON](#)

■ [OTHER INDUSTRY NEWSLETTERS](#)

■ [Current Feature](#)

■ [PRINT-FRIENDLY VERSIONS of UNIDOScope](#)

■ [UNIDOScope 2004 archive](#)

**PAST ISSUES**

this month

[2 - 8 Oct](#)

**past months**

[Sep-2005](#)

[Aug-2005](#)

[Jul-2005](#)

### "Search" as important as "Research" UNIDO project engages CSOs as technology brokers

Vienna, Austria, 28 September, 2005



UNIDO Director-General Carlos Magariños and ICIE President Victor Gloukhikh at UNIDO HQ Vienna ([view larger picture here](#))

The President of the International Congress of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs ([ICIE](#)), Victor Gloukhikh was in Vienna on 28 September, 2005 for detailed discussions with UNIDO Director-General Carlos Magariños on the preparatory phase of a project through which the intermediary private sector (e.g. chambers of commerce and industry, manufacturers' associations) and civil society organisations will transfer technology and establish business partnerships programmes to support micro, small and medium sized enterprises in Africa.

The immediate objective of the project is to strengthen the links and operational relationships between the research community, industry, micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), and civil society organizations (CSOs) as intermediaries for the promotion and transfer of high tech spin-offs, and technology and innovation in agro-industries and the renewable energy sector.

The project was proposed as one of [the recommendations](#) of the **International Conference on The role of Organizations of the Private Sector and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Promotion, Transfer, Adaptation and Diffusion of New Technology and Innovation** organized by UNIDO and ICIE in Moscow, 9 - 11 June 2005. Some 240 representatives of business, science and technology, industry and commerce attended the Moscow event. These included representatives of the private sector and civil society organizations and technology centers from Africa (Algeria, Guinea, Mozambique, Nigeria, Tunisia, Sudan), Asia (China, India, Viet Nam), Latin America (Venezuela, Brazil), Europe and NIS countries (Russian Federation, Belarus, Ukraine, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Serbia, Macedonia, Croatia). Representatives of UNIDO International Technology Centres (ITCs), Investment and Technology Promotions Offices (ITPOs) and UNIDO Exchange also attended.

The proposal for concrete pilot demonstration projects in the food industry, energy sector and high technology spin-offs made at the Moscow conference was strongly influenced by needs identified during the pilot phase of [PREPAO](#) (Programme Regional D'appui Au Secteur agro-Alimentaire Dans Les Pays De L'Afrique De L'ouest) in Guinea, Mali and Senegal, discussions with CSOs in Africa, consultations with UNIDO Representatives and the staff of UNIDO ITPOs and Technology Centers.

UNIDO will have two main counterparts for the technical cooperation aspects of the project: the ICIE and [ENDA](#), (Environmental Development Action in the Third World). ICIE, the main counterpart, is a CSO with consultative status with UNIDO and will act as a technology supplier. ICIE consolidates the National Unions of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of 26 countries and coordinates their industrial and technology transfer activities. ENDA is an international CSO based in Dakar, Senegal and also has consultative status with UNIDO. Its objective is to fight poverty by engaging with institutions at all levels and promoting technology, environmental and private sector issues.

The programme will be based on technology needs assessment of MSMEs in Eastern Africa (Kenya, Sudan, Uganda), Western Africa (Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Senegal) and South Africa and on the preparation of an inventory of available technologies in ICIE's member countries, particularly in NIS and former COMECON countries. The needs assessment and inventory of available technologies will be carried out simultaneously during the preparatory phase.

Engaging CSOs in technology transfer is an important part of UNIDO's corporate strategy of *Productivity Enhancement for Social Advance*. Technology transfer allows developing countries to catch up with industrial countries through "leap frogging". In the catch up through technology transfer, "search" for technology is as important as "research". Linking networks of CSOs in developed and developing countries will mean that the two groups of CSOs can identify technology needs and match them with technology providers.



l.to r at the Moscow Conference in June 2005: UNIDO Director-General Carlos Magariños, Chairman of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, ICIE President, Victor Gloukhikh

In developing countries, the institutional set-up for technology transfer is rather weak and there is a lack of information on available technologies. This UNIDO project with the intermediary private sector and CSOs recognises that since they represent multiple constituencies (ranging from micro and small to medium enterprises as well as multinationals), CSOs can play an important role as brokers in technology transfer, diffusion and innovation.

As "home-grown" institutions in developing countries, CSOs also have the capability to provide the bridge between formal and informal sector, which is a prerequisite for economic development. On the one side, formal sector enterprises are represented by CSOs in the form of chambers of commerce and industry, associations of

industries and various other support institutions. On the other side, CSOs also represent enterprises and individuals that operate in the informal sector in the form of small membership-based business and industry associations, community-based organizations and cooperatives. As the informal sector plays a significant role in developing country economies, the strengthening of those various support and advocacy organizations would substantially contribute to the reinforcement of a country's industrial potential and enhanced economic impact through reduced transaction costs, reinforcement of collective actions, creation of economies of scale and diffusion of spin-offs.

The advantages of national and other local CSOs in a developing country lie in their proximity to the target groups, flexibility, community trust, and capacity to work with the micro level and in remote areas. CSOs offer

numerous other advantages: they are important, sustained channels for networking, information dissemination and training, which facilitate formal and informal collaborative/contractual relationships; they are important sources of information on the national conditions, including the management of intellectual property rights, financing through capital investment and venture capital, etc.; and they ensure the involvement of local and community-based industry along the entire technology development cycle.

In developed countries, CSOs are well structured. Those that can actively support technology promotion and development include: technology transfer institutions (such as industrial liaison offices, technology transfer offices, contract research organizations and other innovation and technology commercialization entities, e.g. [technology parks](#) and incubators), private profit or non-profit intermediaries such as [innovation relay centers](#), information brokers as well as innovation communities.

Mindful of the great potential for CSOs in the transfer of technology, the **International Conference on *The role of Organizations of the Private Sector and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Promotion, Transfer, Adaptation and Diffusion of New Technology and Innovation*** recommended that in addition to strengthening their activities pertaining to information exchange and other competencies, CSOs in developed, transition and developing economies could take a lead role in concretely fostering business and knowledge partnerships between their members. In this role, CSOs could develop a comprehensive portfolio of advisory services for their constituencies, including: the development of micro-credit schemes for SMEs; providing / funding of equipment and technology; providing for market intelligence in the identification of high potential small-scale business opportunities.

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## [coming events](#)

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