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UNIDO General Conference to tackle changing patterns of industrialization

Vienna, 29 November 2007 – High-level representatives from the United Nations Industrial Development Organization's (UNIDO) 172 Member States, including Heads of State and Government, as well as senior representatives of other UN organizations, prominent figures and experts from the business sector, civil society and research institutions, will gather in Vienna for the 12th UNIDO General Conference from 3-7 December 2007. Among the special guests are Pascal Lamy, WTO Director-General, Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, Patricia Francis, ITC Executive Director, Jean-Michel Severino, Director of the French Development Agency, and Cheick Diarra, Africa Chairman of Microsoft. The Conference will open with a keynote address by Ursula Plassnik, Austrian Federal Minister for European and International Affairs.

The only way to reduce poverty is through sustainable industrialization, as industry is the only sector where high productivity growth rates are achievable. Rapidly changing patterns of global production, consumption and trade are having a significant impact on the process of industrial development. Increased industrial production, while critical to reducing poverty, can also create damage to the environment if poorly planned. Trade can potentially benefit developing countries, but it can also increase income inequalities and damage local markets if production capacities are not adequate. Environmental compliance provides long-term benefits to developing countries, but may raise production costs in the short-run, requiring capital-intensive investments in developing countries and putting their cost-based comparative advantage at risk.

UNIDO's response focuses on how to help developing and transition countries reduce poverty through increasing productive capacities, how to strengthen their ability to enter and compete in global markets, how to address energy security and efficiency issues, especially in view of climate change, and how to de-link environmental degradation from economic growth and development. On the first day of the Conference, a high-level interactive forum "Industrial Development in a Changing Global Landscape" will examine these key issues, especially the complementarities and trade-offs among the three themes: poverty reduction through productive activities, trade capacity building and energy and environment.

During the Conference, various side-events are being organized. The high-level panel on "*Wealth Creation for Poverty Reduction: The Role of Industry*" will examine the role of the private sector in creating wealth and reducing poverty. It will discuss innovative ways of fighting poverty - from fostering an enabling environment for poverty reduction and building national capacities for sustainable industrial development to employment-creating and income-generating entrepreneurial initiatives. The roles of the public and private sector will be explored from the perspectives of policy makers, the private sector and experts, drawing on concrete cases where efforts to eradicate poverty have proven effective, including success stories of UNIDO.

A high-level panel on "*Building Productive Capacities for Trade Competitiveness: Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)*" will focus on the EPAs currently being negotiated between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. The panel will discuss the opportunities and challenges for the industry and economic growth of these countries, and the support needed to enable them to benefit. UNIDO has formulated regional competitiveness enhancement and upgrading programs, which will assist these countries to maximize the benefits from opportunities provided by the EPAs and prepare their economies and industries to face increased competition.

"*Green Industry: Promoting Growth and Protecting the Environment*" is a panel expected to discuss how industrial sectors could be encouraged to move towards greater resource efficiency, how markets for environmental services could be created and what industrial policies are needed to provide the incentives. UNIDO encourages the use of cleaner technologies and

practices that reduce the use of energy and raw materials, especially toxic ones, while at the same time increasing the use of renewable energy. UNIDO promotes the move towards a circular flow of materials where these are repeatedly recycled after use, and where suppliers shift from simply selling products to supplying services through product leasing or similar business models. UNIDO also identified “corporate social responsibility” (CSR) as a possible driver for such a structural change in traditional economic models and production methods.

Five regional round tables, focusing on themes of specific interest, are also a part of the Conference:

“The China and India Factor: Implications for developing countries in Asia and the Pacific region.” The rapid growth, openness and trade performance as well as the sheer size of the domestic markets of China and India are being felt worldwide. The round table will discuss the challenges, threats and opportunities for these two economies and for other developing countries in the region, as well as the implications on natural resources and the environment.

“Mano River Union - Youth and women for sustainable development”. Youth unemployment, insecurity, and emigration have become closely interlinked in the Mano River Union (MRU) countries (Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire). In a bid to help them address these concerns, UNIDO, ILO, UNDP and UNOWA are developing a multi-stakeholder programme on productive and decent work. The round table will provide the opportunity for Heads of State and Government of the MRU region to discuss with partners and donors approaches to stimulating economic activity and increasing income-generating opportunities for youth.

“The role of manufacturing industries in the economic diversification process of Arab countries: Challenges and opportunities”. Some Arab countries are richly endowed with mineral resources, the proceeds of which have been used to modernize infrastructure, create employment, and improve social indicators. The round table will discuss the challenges and opportunities faced by them as they seek to diversify their economies and the role manufacturing industries can play within this process.

“Technology foresight and water productivity”. During the recent ‘Technology Foresight Summit 2007’ in Budapest, discussions were held on the value of water for Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States, as well as on the urgent need to increase water productivity, re-use and recycling. “Zero discharge” — where all industrial effluents are reused and recycled, thus minimizing polluting discharges to water bodies — was identified as a critical goal. This round table is intended to explain the concept of “zero discharge”, and discuss ways of implementing it.

“Reviewing industrial competitiveness and the environment in the LAC region: Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the role of the private sector in sustainable industrial development”. Although many Latin American and Caribbean (LAC) economies have made substantial macroeconomic progress, the social disparities have not been reduced with the same success. This round table will focus on issues concerning the role of industrial actors and the private sector in enhancing SME competitiveness and fostering social equity by taking into account environmental treaties and CSR principles and practices.

In addition, several presentations and exhibitions will be organized, among which:

“ICHET- Hydrogen Activities Around the World, Turkey”. The International Center for Hydrogen Energy Technologies (ICHET) is a UNIDO project designed to develop, demonstrate and promote technologies for the implementation of a hydrogen energy economy suitable for use in developing countries and encourage the utilization of hydrogen as an alternative fuel.

“The State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA), China - Compliance to Multilateral Environmental Agreements”. UNIDO and SEPA have been implementing a series of projects under Multilateral Environmental Agreements, responding to the objectives of China national strategy for environmental protection.

The General Conference will take place at the Austria Centre, Bruno-Kreisky-Platz 1, Vienna. For more information see www.unido.org/gc12. The accreditation form is available at www.unido.org/gc12/media. Please present valid press card and passport/ID upon entering the conference premises.

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