

2007 N°1

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## Innovation for Development – Joint Conference with UNESCO, Paris

The association's 2007 conference was organised jointly with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at their headquarters in Paris at the beginning of May. This was a rather unique conference on two counts; not only was this the first time that TII teamed up with UNESCO to organise its annual conference, but it also marked the first year that TII chose to put innovation

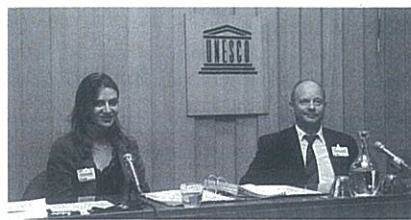
and global development issues at the top of the agenda. Through the formal presentations and facilitated debate, the conference succeeded in putting the spotlight on ways in which science, technology and innovation can be harnessed to benefit populations and meet countries' development challenges in all areas of the globe. The idea behind the conference was born one year previously in Newcastle at TII's 2006 annual conference and was nurtured successfully through to fruition by the conference team of Walter Erdelen and Tony Marjoram of the Natural Sciences Division of UNESCO and Christine Robinson and Michel Duhamel of TII.



Walter Erdelen, UNESCO

Over 150 participants from 40 countries attended the 2-day conference which consisted of two plenary and 7 parallel sessions. A prestigious panel of 60 speakers from both developing nations and emerging economies, as well as advanced countries and international institutions, offered informed and fascinating insights into the contributions of science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship to sustainable development around the world.

The conference was opened by TII President, Michel Duhamel, and UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences, Walter Erdelen, who



Christine Robinson, Secretary General, and Michel Duhamel, President, at the 2007 AGM which was held at UNESCO in Paris. In conjunction with the conference

drawed the audience's attention to the importance of innovation in addressing the UN's Millennium Development Goals, and in particular poverty reduction. This was happening at two levels: at a macro level, innovation was promoting social, economic, industrial and infrastructure development, while at the micro level, direct applications and technological innovation were addressing basic needs

in water supply, sanitation, housing, food production, energy, transport, communications, enterprise development and job creation. The conference was poised to become an interesting precursor to the first global meeting of Science and Technology Ministers of all nations at UNESCO which was to take place in October 2007 on the theme of "Science and Technology for Sustainable Development".

The opening plenary session

consisted of three scene-setting presentations by speakers from the World Bank, the OECD and Demos (UK) as well as three grassroots reports from practitioners working in India, Africa and worldwide. Jean-Eric Aubert, a lead specialist at the World Bank Institute in Paris, provided insights into innovation and development based on the World Bank's experiences. He stressed the need to transfer technologies which satisfied basic local needs, but also the need for new industries which served global demands. Education, training and flexible agencies were essential ingredients for creating an innovation culture in developing countries, as were policies building on local strengths and available resources and facilitating appropriation by local entrepreneurs and communities. Government was to be seen as the "innovation gardener".



Jean-Eric Aubert, World Bank