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Universiteit Maastricht

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For immediate release

United Nations University and University of Maastricht open joint research and training institute

United Nations University (UNU) and the University of Maastricht have signed a cooperation agreement for a joint research and training centre focusing on innovation, technology and development. The new centre, to be known as UNU-MERIT (*Maastricht Economic and social Research and training centre on Innovation and Technology*), comes into formal existence on 1 January 2006.

The opening of UNU-MERIT follows a successful one-year transitional period during which the two universities explored modalities for integrating their respective research institutes: United Nations University Institute for New Technologies (UNU-INTECH) and the Maastricht Economic Research Institute on Innovation and Technology (MERIT). Professor Luc Soete, the founding director of MERIT, and joint director of UNU-INTECH and MERIT during the transitional phase, is the first director of the integrated institute.

The main purpose of integrating the activities of the two Maastricht-based Institutes was to pool their intellectual resources and realize synergies in their research content and organization. UNU-MERIT's research base will rise to nearly 60 research staff and 40 PhD researchers in 2006. In size and global coverage, therefore, UNU-MERIT will become one of the most significant research and training centres in Europe in the area of science, technology and innovation studies. Its combined focus on both the developing and developed world will give it a unique position leading to new research synergies that have rarely been realized. UNU-MERIT will also be one of the largest Research and Training Centres of United Nations University, with the potential to contribute significantly to UNU's goal of resolving the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare.

UNU-MERIT will work to achieve three overarching goals:

- (1) To become a world class research centre of academic excellence attracting the best researchers from all over the world;
- (2) To become a crucial policy think tank on knowledge policies at the global, national and regional level, in the developing as well as developed world;
- (3) To become a major international academic and policy training centre providing both PhD training and PhD supervision as well as policy training to students and civil servants from developing and developed countries.

Over the past year a common research mission and research programme for the integrated Institute has been elaborated. The programme is organized around five thematic areas: *Micro-based evidence research on*

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innovation and technological change; the role of technology in growth and development; knowledge and industrial dynamics; innovation, entrepreneurship and development; and the governance of science technology and innovation.

As a training centre, UNU-MERIT will build on the long history of close collaboration between the two former institutes, INTECH and MERIT, in running a joint PhD programme - currently training more than 30 in-house PhD students. UNU-MERIT will launch a second PhD programme in September 2006, with a focus on applied innovation studies in the global economy. UNU-MERIT will also continue and expand the existing capacity building programmes for policymakers by strengthening links with partner organizations and governments in developing countries. UNU-MERIT will further enhance the relevance and accessibility of its research and training activities by establishing regional research and capacity building units in developing countries. Two such units focusing on agricultural innovation are currently under development for the South Asia (Hyderabad, India) and Eastern Africa (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) regions, in collaboration with the International Livestock Research Institute.

About UNU-MERIT

United Nations University – Maastricht Economic and social Research and training centre on Innovation and Technology, or UNU-MERIT in short, is a research and training centre of United Nations University (UNU). UNU is an international community of scholars engaged in research, postgraduate training and the dissemination of knowledge aimed at resolving the pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare. UNU-MERIT is located at, and works in close collaboration with, the University of Maastricht in The Netherlands.

UNU-MERIT's research mission is to provide more insights into the social, political and economic international and local context within which innovation and technological change is created, adapted, selected, diffused, and improved upon. The Institute's research and training programmes address a broad range of relevant policy questions dealing with the national and international governance of innovation, intellectual property protection, and knowledge creation and diffusion.

For more information, please contact:

Ms. Wangu Mwangi

Communications Coordinator, UNU-MERIT

Keizer Karelplein 19

6211 TC Maastricht

The Netherlands

Tel +3143 350-6365

Fax + 31 43 350-6399

Email: mwangi@merit.unu.edu

URL: [http:// www.merit.unu.edu](http://www.merit.unu.edu)

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