



**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

***Ad Hoc Expert Group Meeting on Science and  
Technology for Sustainable Development:  
Towards a Green Revolution in Africa***

***Addis Ababa, 10-12 June 2003***

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**Opening Statement**

**by**

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Director  
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**Chairperson,  
Distinguished Experts,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Executive Secretary of ECA, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this Expert Group Meeting on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development, with a special focus on the theme of "Towards a Green Revolution in Africa." We are deeply grateful that you kindly accepted to allocate some of your invaluable time to come here and share with us your expertise, experience and insights on one of the most challenging issues facing Africa: harnessing science and technology for sustainable development.

Indeed, achieving the millennium development goals (MDGs) and sustainable development in Africa represents a daunting challenge, given the weak science and technology capacities of most African countries. Meeting Africa's development challenges in the areas of poverty eradication, food security, health, water and sanitation, and international competitiveness in the context of globalization, requires no less than a new scientific and technological regime in Africa.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The underlying principles of the sustainable development paradigm, which underpins development goals and strategies, demand policies that are, among other things, pro-environment, pro-poor and pro-innovation. Simultaneous progress in many areas of science and technology policy should therefore be at the core of a viable strategy aiming at achieving broad-based economic growth and sustainable development in African.

In this regard, ECA has undertaken a series of activities that focus on creating awareness as to the potential contribution of science and technology to economic and social development with environmental protection, and on reinforcing institutional, analytical and policy-making capacities of our member States. Our Program for the biennium 2002-2003 features work on emerging critical issues in Science and Technology for Africa's sustainable Development, and includes the following activities:

- A study on "Emerging Critical Issues in Science and Technology for Food Security and Sustainable Development."
- A study on "Making Science and Technology work for the poor."
- A study on "Towards a Green Revolution in Africa: Harnessing Science and Technology for sustainable modernization of agriculture and rural transformation (SMART/AGRI).
- A case study on "Science, technology and innovation policy."
- The preparation of a program on Biotechnology for Sustainable Development.

These activities were undertaken in response to recommendations of ECA policy organs, namely the Committee on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the Committee on National Resources, Science and Technology (CNRST), which, by decision of the 26<sup>th</sup> Session of the Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, have been merged into a single Committee on Sustainable Development.

The main objectives of this meeting are for you to:

1. Review emerging critical issues and ECA activities in science and technology for sustainable development in Africa;
2. Discuss science, technology and innovation policy in Africa;
3. Reflect on the potential, readiness and prospects of Africa to embark on a Green Revolution; and
4. Provide us feedback, recommendations and advice on the way forward.

**Dear Experts,**

The over-arching objective of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is to eradicate poverty in Africa and to place African countries on a path of sustainable growth and development. This clearly calls for "making science and technology work for the poor." We also know that agricultural development is a prime condition to broad-base economic growth, food security and poverty reduction in Africa. Poverty is predominantly rural, as some 70% of all poor Africans live in rural areas. And, the income and livelihood of the bulk of the rural population depend primarily on agricultural enterprises, which employ directly or indirectly 90% of the rural labor force. Hence, for the majority of African households today, triggering a Green Revolution to boost productivity and competitiveness of domestic food and agricultural chains -- production, processing, marketing and trade -- holds the key to improving overall income and food security. The NEPAD underscores the primacy of this challenge by featuring agriculture as the only productive sector among its areas of priority.

This explains why you are kindly invited to pay a special attention to the theme "Towards a Green Revolution in Africa." Our choice to focus on this theme is further grounded on a call made by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in February 2003, urging African countries to promote a Green Revolution in Africa. This call is an explicit challenge to all stakeholders and partners to deliver their part of the bargain. We strongly believe that Africa can and must pursue and realize a Green Revolution, which has been delayed for too long in the continent. To do so, the key challenge lays in Africa understanding the scientific and technological fundamentals of the Green Revolution, why it was delayed in Africa, and how it can be designed, triggered and implemented in the African context. We invite you to critically review a paper that we commissioned on the subject. Moreover, we will have the benefit of a Guest Lecture from the work of the United Nations' Millennium Project's Hunger Task Force on the topic of "**A Doubly Green Revolution in Africa**", which will certainly be a strong source of inspiration and guidance in your deliberations.

**In conclusion,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Let me stress that your input, feedback and advice on the activities and outputs submitted to your review offers a key peer review mechanism, a filter and a focusing lens to distill out the best practices for ECA and Africa to move forward on the ideas at stake. Some of these activities are fairly complete, others in progress. Please judge them as they are, and make feasible recommendations that ECA and Member States can implement in policy and program development strategies, to capacitate Africa to harness advances in science and technology for sustainable development.

Fully confident that you will deliver, I declare this Expert Group Meeting on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development open.  
I thank you.