Marrakech, 16 April 2019 (ECA) - The Africa Regional Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Forum was one of the pre-events of the fifth session of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD 5) that took place Tuesday at the Palais des Congrès de la Palmeraie in Marrakech, Morocco.

The session raised opportunities for scaling up actions considering the role of STI in accelerating efforts to achieve the SDGs under review by ARFSD5. These SDGs are: SDG 4 (quality education); SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth); SDG 10 (reduced inequalities); SDG 13 (climate action); SDG 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions); and SDG 17 (partnerships for the Goals).

The high-level meeting was largely agreed that Africa will not make much progress if it does not change its education curricula to meet current technological trends; does not reskill its youth and use them as its driving force for development, especially through STI.

"We need to sharpen our policies for inclusive education that can create real jobs that can drive growth at a much high rate than what we are currently experiencing; and we need partnerships with the private sector if we are to go to that next level," said Mr. Mmboneni Muofhe, Deputy Director-General, Technology Innovation at South Africa’s Department of Science and Technology.

Africa, he said, has a long way to go to ensure inclusive development and that no-one is left behind by development hence need for governments to embrace new technologies to leapfrog.

Ethiopia’s Science and Education Minister, Mr. Afework Kassu Gizaw, said his country is working hard to become an industrial powerhouse in Africa, backed by strengthened economic and communications technology policies.

He shared with participants what his country is doing through its National Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Policy to invest in STI infrastructure and youth innovation through relevant, quality education, among other programmes.

Egypt’s Deputy Scientific Research Minister, Yasser R. Abdel-Fattah, also spoke about his country’s efforts through scientific research and innovation to achieve sustainable development.

Egypt seeks excellence in higher education and scientific research, he said, adding his country was aiming to be one of the best 30 economies globally by 2030.

"We aim to be a creative and innovative society producing science, technology, and knowledge, within a comprehensive system ensuring the developmental value of knowledge and innovation and using their outputs to face challenges and meet national objectives," said Mr. Abdel-Fattah.

African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) Director, Ms. Karima Bounemra Soltane, said Africa needs to tap into opportunities provided by STI to create new opportunities for its populace, especially its youth, if it is to create new jobs that can foster growth and ensure there is sustainable development.
Participants noted that government policies on the continent were increasingly recognising the role of science, technology and innovation in accelerating sustainable development but much more needed to be done.

The African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum, organized by the Department of Science and Technology of the Government of the Republic of South Africa and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), allowed participants to discuss how STI can help the continent to achieve sustainable development and Africa’s Agenda 2063.

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