

African MPs urged to leverage policies that promote science, technology and innovation

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Cairo, 18 October 2012 (ECA) – Senior ECA and AUC officials on Wednesday 17 October joined Egypt's Minister of Scientific Research Prof. Nadia Zakhary, to urge more than 50 parliamentarians from across Africa to begin a crusade for national policies that promote science, technology and innovation as the bedrocks of the continent's sustainable development. The recommendation was made during the first training workshop for members of the African Inter-Parliamentary Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation (AIPF-STI) that ran for two days in Egypt's chief city – Cairo.

In her capacity as chairperson of the fourth Bureau of the African Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology (AMCOST-IV), Prof Zakhary enjoined the MPs to help build a strong synergy between governments, business and academia to spin-off innovations with societal value and economic impact. This call was re-echoed by a statement from Ms Vera Brenda Ngosi, Director of Human Resources, Science and Technology of the African Union Commission.

Similarly, the Speaker of Egypt's Upper House of Parliament, the Hon. Prof Ahmad Fahmy, who opened the workshop on 16 October, emphasised the role of MPs to ensure that STI plans are responsive to their people's needs and country development agendas. In his view, Africa possesses the requisite skills both on the continent and in the Diaspora to craft the development of national and sub-regional STI systems that would enhance the continent's development.

The Egyptian Parliamentary Speaker further said MPs ought to promote legislation that supports investment in STI, especially in the areas of education, research and infrastructure. This was corroborated by a message from the Director of ECA's [ICT, Science and Technology Division](#), Ms Aida Opoku-Mensah, in which she insisted on the need for governments to allocate at least 1% of national GDPs to Research and Development issues.

AIPF-STI was set up during the second session of ECA's [Committee on Development Information, Science and Technology \(CODIST-II\)](#) in May 2011 in Addis Ababa. It is a platform for cooperation, information and knowledge sharing in the area of STI among African parliamentarians, policy-makers, the scientific community, media, academia, civil society and the private sector. This first training activity of the group was jointly organized by AMCOST, AUC, ECA, UNESCO and the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO). The Government of Egypt provided hosting support.

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