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2020–2030: A decade to deliver a transformed and prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063

Concept note

I. Background and mandate of the African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum

1. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development established the collaborative Multi-Stakeholder Science, Technology, and Innovation Forum for the Sustainable Development Goals (STI Forum). The Science, Technology and Innovation Forum is part of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, which was established by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and launched by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The Forum is organized by the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, and is supported by a 10-member group appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General drawn from the private sector, scientific community and civil society.¹

2. The global Multi-Stakeholder STI Forum is convened once a year to “discuss science, technology and innovation cooperation around thematic areas for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, congregating all relevant stakeholders to actively contribute in their area of expertise”, as well as “provide a venue for facilitating interaction, matchmaking and the establishment of networks between relevant stakeholders and multi-stakeholder partnerships in order to identify and examine technology needs and gaps, including with regard to scientific cooperation, innovation and capacity-building”.² All these measures are expected to help facilitate the development, transfer and dissemination of relevant technologies for the Sustainable Development Goals.

3. The African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum was established by the Conference of Ministers. In its resolution 960 (LI) of 15 May 2018, they called on the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), in collaboration with the African Union Commission and other partners, to take all steps necessary to organize on a regular basis a multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology

¹ A/RES/70/1.

² Ibid., para. 70.



and innovation as an input into the work of the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the Multi-stakeholder Science, Technology and Innovation Forum for the Sustainable Development Goals.

4. The first African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum was held in Marrakech, Morocco, on 16 April 2019, in collaboration with the Department of Science and Innovation, South Africa. The Forum generated a number of key messages that recognized:

- (a) Inadequate hard and soft STI infrastructure as a major constraint;
- (b) Inadequate investment by African countries in STI;
- (c) The importance for countries to harness the innovative spirit of Africa's youth;
- (d) The need for African countries to develop strong STI policies and strategies;
- (e) The promotion of Intra-African STI collaboration as essential.

5. It also identified cross-cutting issues and called on countries to consider (a) promoting local solutions for local challenges, (b) encouraging intra-Africa trade and competitiveness, (c) enhancing private sector participation and intellectual property protection, (d) promoting peace and security, (e) empowering youths and women, and (f) facilitating regional collaborations in STI.

II. The second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum

6. The second Forum will be held from 23 and 24 February 2019 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, and will be hosted by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology Development of Zimbabwe. The Forum is co-organized with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the Department of Science and Innovation, South Africa.

7. The Forum is designed to meet both the global and continental mandates. As noted above, it will serve as a platform for exploring and facilitating interactions, matchmaking, cooperation and partnerships among the relevant stakeholders, in order to drive technology development and transfer, and create regional innovation networks for co-learning and co-creation, and for sharing of experiences between and among multi-stakeholders. Further, it will also provide a platform to identify and examine technology needs and institutional voids and gaps that should be addressed to enable African countries to fully harness and deploy science, technology and innovation to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

8. These include scientific cooperation, innovation and capacity-building, as well as facilitation of the development, transfer and dissemination of relevant technologies for the Sustainable Development Goals. The Forum will showcase efforts that the public, private sector and individuals deploy to accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals as well as how technologies, especially technologies developed in Africa, can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063.

III. Preparations for the second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum

9. The second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum will draw lessons from the first African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum, and the organizational and structural aspects of the Multi-stakeholder Science, Technology, and Innovation Forum for the Sustainable Development Goals. In this regard, the second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum will be held over a two-day period beginning one day before the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, and will mobilize Member States, business leaders, academia and civil society to contribute fully and benefit from its proceedings. In this regard, a number of preparatory steps have been undertaken in building up the African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum. The major steps include the following:

A. Call for innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals

10. The call for innovation is designed to showcase innovations developed in and for Africa that significantly accelerate the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals; facilitating knowledge exchange, fostering collaboration and promoting uptake of innovative solutions. The call is also designed to attract investors and potential industry partners to participate in the second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum.³ At least five winners will be invited to present their innovations during the African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum and the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, and the top three will receive certificates of recognition during an awards ceremony at the African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum, presided over by a Minister. Youth and women are encouraged to submit their innovations.

B. The Africa Open Innovation Platform for Africa

11. The Government of South Africa has recently launched a national innovation platform termed the Innovation Bridge (www.innovationbridge.info/). The platform showcases innovations by Sustainable Development Goal (such as Goal 1, Poverty), areas of specialization (such as Agriculture) and organization (such as Medical Research Council), as well as funding opportunities. The platform will first be extended to Southern African Development Community countries and launched during the Forum, with a possible extension to all interested countries, with the expectation that each country will designate a focal point to manage the national mirror page.

C. The African Science, Technology and Innovations Advisory Group

12. Many African STI policies are driven and often led by international players and their consultants at home and abroad, whose comprehension of the African environment may not always be so well grounded. This perhaps has led to the perception that Africa has some of the best STI policies, but they are poorly implemented. Little attention has been paid to the fact that the policies may be poorly designed and thus, even when fully implemented, the impact is

³ ECA. Call for Innovations to Accelerate the Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals. Available from www.uneca.org/astif2020/pages/call-innovations-accelerate-attainment-sustainable-development-goals. Accessed on 10 January 2020.

limited and/or their implementation heavily relies on personalities rather than institutional setups. To this end, ECA and its partners have created an open-ended group of multidisciplinary senior experts from a wide range of sectors, who have volunteered to offer their time and experience to support regional and national efforts in wide areas of science, technology and innovation. The Steering Committee will be launched at the second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum.

D. Best practices in policy design and implementation in Africa

13. Science, technology and innovation policies are important in guiding national efforts to accelerate development, acquisition and use of technologies and innovations. This call is designed specifically for government institutions such as national councils, advisory bodies and ministries that wish to showcase their STI or STI-related policies (such as biotechnology, digital, energy and nanotechnology) as good practices.

14. The main objective of the call is to encourage collaborations and partnerships, investment in innovation, information sharing and technology diffusion, as well as to bring innovation to the global stage and stimulate interest in STI.⁴

IV. Objective of the Science, Technology and Innovation Forum

15. The overall objective of the second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum is to conduct a regional follow-up and review of progress made in order to identify potential mechanisms and measures that countries can deploy to scale up action, facilitate peer learning and advance transformative solutions to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the goals of Agenda 2063:

(a) Conduct a regional follow-up to, and review of, the implementation of the goals, with a focus on STI-related targets and STI as a means of implementation;

(b) Provide a platform for peer learning and sharing of experiences, approaches, good practices and lessons learned, in order to accelerate the implementation of the two agendas;

(c) Identify the technological gaps, institutional voids, challenges and opportunities for driving innovation for scaling up the implementation;

(d) Identify actionable mechanisms for collaboration and matchmaking, to strengthen regional and international partnerships and investments in science, technology and innovation, to accelerate implementation of the two agendas within the decade 2020–2030.

V. Theme of the second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum

16. The theme of the second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum is drawn from the theme of the sixth session of the Regional Forum:

⁴ ECA. Call for Best Practices in Policy Design and Implementation in Africa – Government. Available from www.uneca.org/bpdia-gov/pages/call-best-practices-policy-design-and-implementation-africa-government. Accessed on 10 January 2020.

“2020–2030: A decade to deliver a transformed and prosperous Africa through the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063”.

17. The sixth Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development will undertake a review of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals in five clusters – People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnerships – as shown in the table below.

| <i>Sub-theme area</i> | <i>Sustainable Development Goals⁵ cluster</i> |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| People | Goals 1 (No poverty), 2 (Zero hunger), 3 (Good health and well-being), 4 (Quality education) and 5 (Gender equality) |
| Prosperity | Goals 7 (Affordable and clean energy), 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 9 (Industry, innovation and infrastructure), 10 (Reduced inequalities) and 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) |
| Planet | Goals 6 (Clean water and sanitation), 12 (Responsible consumption and production), 13 (Climate action), 14 (Life below water) and 15 (Life on land) |
| Peace | Goal 16 (Peace, justice and strong institutions) |
| Partnerships | Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) |

VI. Format of the second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum

18. The second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum will be comprised with the following activities: high-level policy dialogues, panel discussions and showcasing events:

(a) *High-level policy dialogues*: At least two high-level policy dialogues comprising Heads of State and Governments, ministers, heads of United Nations agencies, and chief executive officers of firms, as well as vice chancellors of universities and heads of research and technology organizations, will be organized. The interactive high-level policy dialogues will focus on broad and cross-cutting issues and strategic direction, including opportunities and transformative levers, partnerships, commitments, actions and other measures to accelerate implementation;

(b) *Panel session to assess progress on the 2030 Agenda and Agenda 2063*: At least five sessions (on People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnerships) will be held to assess the progress and contribution of STI to date, and the actions needed to amplify the impact of STI in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. All panel sessions are organized in a town hall fashion without PowerPoint presentations, to encourage free discussions to take place;

(c) *Special sessions*: There are several special sessions and events that are intended to inform the Forum. Some of the key ones include:

- (i) Emerging Technologies and the Fourth Industrial Revolution as tools for Accelerating the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, organized by ECA and the Department of Science and Innovation, South Africa;
- (ii) Side Event on Open Science, organized by UNESCO;
- (iii) Awards ceremony for innovators and STI policy leaders; and
- (iv) Dinner organized by the Government of Zimbabwe.

(d) *Review and adoption of key messages of the Forum*: During this part of the Forum, all stakeholders will review, propose amendments and adopt

⁵ Each report will cover the corresponding goals of Agenda 2063.

the key messages aimed at accelerating implementation to be submitted to the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development 2020 and to inform the Inter-Agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the Multi-stakeholder STI Forum.

VII. Expected outputs

19. The meeting will generate the following key outputs:

(a) A report of the African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum that will inform the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and the Multi-Stakeholder STI Forum;

(b) A policy brief on the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Emerging Technologies;

(c) An outcome document of the UNESCO Open Science Platforms and the potential role in learning, research, development and innovation; and

(d) A general guide for implementing a regional innovation platform for facilitating technology transfer and collaboration.

VIII. Expected outcomes

20. The second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum is consciously designed to foster collaboration, diffusion of technology and innovation, and scale-up policy and operational efforts needed to accelerate the contribution of STI to meet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Specifically, the following will be the key tangible and intangible outcomes:

(a) A report of key outcomes that could guide Member States, the private sector and non-State actors to amplify the impact of STI on measures that accelerates the achievement of the two agendas;

(b) A continental advisory panel to support Member States to design and implement STI and related policies will be launched – which will continue to grow – providing public and private sector players with increased knowledge and skills to act in a timely and decisive fashion;

(c) A regional platform for exchanging information of funding, innovation and institutions will be launched to accelerate technology transfer, collaboration and co-creation among key STI partners in Africa.

IX. Participants

21. The meeting will be attended by representatives of:

All 54 African Member States of the United Nations, the African Union Commission, African Development Bank, regional economic communities, civil society, business and industry organizations, academia and research institutions, agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, and other international agencies and organizations, as well as all development partners.

X. Working languages

22. The meeting will be conducted in English and French, with simultaneous interpretation in both languages.

XI. Dates and venue

23. The second African Science, Technology and Innovation Forum will be held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, 23 and 24 February 2020.

XII. Contacts

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