

# THE THIRD AFRICA SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FORUM

CAIRO, EGYPT, 10-12 FEBRUARY 2018

## MINISTERIAL DECLARATION

### PREAMBLE

**WE**, the Ministers and Heads of delegations attending the Third Africa Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) held in Cairo, Egypt from February 10 to 12, 2018;

**RENEWING** our commitments made at the First Africa STI Forum held in Nairobi in 2012 and the Second Africa STI Forum held in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco in 2014;

**UNDERSCORING** the critical role of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in socio-economic development of the continent and the need to accelerate investment in these sectors and boost implementation at national, regional and continental levels;

**TAKING INTO CONSIDERATION** the African Union's vision and strategies for Africa's development as embodied in *Agenda 2063 "The Africa We Want"*, the *Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA)*, the *Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA)*, as well as the *Continental Technical, Vocational and Educational Training (TVET) Strategy*;

**BEING AWARE** of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by all United Nations Member States defining specific targets to be achieved by 2030 and the related implications for Africa;

**RECALLING** the commitment of Heads of State and Government of African countries to invest in Education, STI and allocate at least 1% of GDP to Research and Development (R&D);

### **Cognisant that:**

**By 2050 Africa will have the largest population** in the world with the largest youth and the largest workforce. Therefore, Africa is in a good position to draw **substantial and lasting benefits from the**

**demographic dividend** if appropriate investments are made towards the youth and for building adequate human capital;

**STI has played a determining role in creating the conditions** for the rapid transition of countries to the status of emerging nations and is a driving force for attaining SDGs;

**Higher Education Institutions and Public Research Organizations are essential to reach the stage of Innovation** which is necessary to strengthen productivity, value chains development and competitiveness;

**The private sector is a key partner** for making STI an effective and sustainable instrument for Africa's development;

**Innovative financing mechanism** are needed to foster STI development and equip the youth with adequate skills for tomorrow's labor market;

**The African Development Bank's High 5 priorities for Africa, coupled with the priorities of other key partners, offer a framework** for the enhancement of STI towards the continent's transformation as envisioned in the African Union's *Agenda 2063, "The Africa We Want"*;

**Continental organizations such as the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and sub-regional organizations need to strengthen and reinforce their capacity** to provide needed assistance to Member States to build STI policy making and implementation capacity in order to fully harness STI for their development and structural transformation;

**The committee of Ten Heads of State and Government champions for Education, Science and Technology was endorsed by the African Union** on January 27, 2018 with the imperative to provide strategic policy direction that promotes Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa and to constantly monitor progress on agreed decisions, targets and addressing barriers.

**Noting that:**

**Economic growth for the African continent as a whole is still very limited in the midst of immense potential wealth in natural resources,** a situation which does not make it possible to improve the living conditions of the populations in a sustainable way;

**Progress has been achieved in promoting STI, but challenges still persist**, preventing the full integration of STI in Africa's development, and these challenges are related to policy-making, implementation instruments, financing, capacity strengthening, skills provision, R&D, gender equality, regional integration, among others.

### **Hereby agree to:**

**Keep STI high in our national, regional and continental development agendas**, ensuring closer linkages with our natural resources and value chains potential;

**Strengthen our higher education institutions and public research organizations as essential elements of the STI ecosystems** in order to build a solid and relevant human capital base and enhance R&D;

**Encourage the emergence and development of private sector R&D initiatives** in order to widen the scope of innovation which is essential to boost industrialization, youth employment and wealth creation;

**Increase our efforts in leveraging financing from private sector, as part of their corporate social responsibility, and other nontraditional sources** to complement public funding in order to support a culture of innovation.

### **Hereby commit to:**

#### 1. Enhancing the Relevance of National, Regional and Continental Research and Innovation Policies

1.1. Design and adopt policies that promote gender equality in education in general and higher education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields in particular, including aspects related to student participation, teacher training and continuous professional development, academic and administrative staffing and R&D;

1.2. Engage in a national, regional and continental dialogue involving all innovation system actors, civil society included, on the relationship between innovation and research, and society at large,

exploring the move from STI policy to Policy for Innovation and Research;

- 1.3. Revisit policy assumptions, the means for determining the agenda and priorities for innovation and research, including the role of use-oriented applied research, valorizing R&D, and creating favorable conditions for entrepreneurship and innovation;
- 1.4. Emphasize the importance of all types of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) and the benefits of knowledge sharing;
- 1.5. Preserve and invest in indigenous knowledge research and development;
- 1.6. Invest in maintaining and procuring new research infrastructures, and centers of excellence to foster research and development;
- 1.7. Establish an African Patent Office which aims at ensuring a high quality of Intellectual Property environment for Africa.

## 2. Building Skills, Infrastructure and Promising Sectors

- 2.1. Enable and support youth to build tomorrow's society through innovation;
- 2.2. Support Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in innovative fields by encouraging the private sector to develop platforms and incubators for start-ups, by building capacities in biotechnologies, electronics, computer science, automation and telecommunications along with expertise in the environmental sciences and social sciences, that can find applications with social media, Big Data, drone technology, and cybersecurity, etc.;
- 2.3. Invest in agriculture, water systems and renewable energy to nurture a circular economy based on the sustainable and responsible use of natural resources;
- 2.4. Support medical and pharmaceutical research in Neglected Tropical Diseases, Infectious Disease in order to contribute to the achievement of Global Health Security;
- 2.5. Mobilize resources and partners and invest in Africa biodiversity and food heritage to reverse the continuous degradation in the nutritional status of Africans. It is a pressing need given the importance of nutrition to sustainable development and science, technology and innovation.

## 3. Sustainable financing

- 3.1. Increase relevant investment in higher education institutions and recapitalize public research organizations;
- 3.2. incentivize private sector innovation activities;

- 3.3. Invest in research on global challenges, Agenda 2063 and SDGs related fields, including inclusive and grassroots innovation;
- 3.4. Develop and implement national resource mobilization strategies in line with the recommendations of the July 2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda in order to reach the 1% GDP budget target for Research and Development (R&D);
- 3.5. Develop innovative and concerted funding alliances and partnerships between public and private actors and bilateral and multilateral donors in order to support innovation and research capacity building;
- 3.6. Support the development of the African Education Fund as an innovative mechanism to attract sustainable financing, with greater focus on STI in collaboration with regional development Banks such as the African Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank and other financial institutions for mutual benefits of countries and partners.

#### 4. Benchmarking and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

- 4.1. Invest, use and develop capacity for measurement systems, including qualitative M&E of policy implementation, especially with the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) African Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators (ASTII) and the African Observatory for Science, Technology and Innovation (AOSTI) and the UNESCO global observatory for science policy instrument (GO-SPIN);
- 4.2. Experiment with heuristic methods to estimate innovation and research activities and capacity, and the promotion of the African Innovation Scoreboard;
- 4.3. Support the establishment of the African Institute for Future Studies, a knowledge commons dedicated to understanding the Fourth Industrial Revolution, New Energy and Climate Change.

#### 5. Strengthening Regional Cooperation and integration

- 5.1. Promote regional and South-South cooperation through knowledge sharing mechanisms, students and researchers mobility programmes, joint R&D activities, establishment of regional centres of excellence, and innovation hubs and promote integration into global research and innovation networks in a manner which fosters sharing and optimization of resources;
- 5.2. Support the rolling-up of the Pan African University of the African Union;

- 5.3. Mobilize the Diaspora scientific community for bold contribution to the Africa STI Agenda through collaboration, cooperation and resource mobilization.

### **Appreciation**

We express our sincere appreciation to His Excellency President Abdel Fattah El Sisi, the Government and the People of The Arab Republic of Egypt for the warm welcome and hospitality and very valuable contribution that allowed the Third Africa Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation 2018 to be successful.

*Issued in Cairo, Egypt, on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2018*