



African Union



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## CONCEPT NOTE

**African Science Technology and Innovation Indicators (ASTII) Initiative Workshop to Launch ASTII Phase 2 and the African Innovation Outlook Series 23-25 May 2011, United Nations Conference Centre, Addis Ababa.**

### **Background**

The African Science Technology and Innovation Indicators (ASTII) Initiative is a programme within the African Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA). The CPA was adopted in 2005 by the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST) as a framework for science, technology and innovation (STI) to respond to the socio-economic challenges facing the continent.

The first phase of the ASTII programme ran from 2007 to 2010 and was designed to serve as a learning mechanism, giving nineteen African Union member States the means and opportunity to engage in mutual learning and sharing to improve the measurement of science, technology and innovation. The second phase of ASTII will commence in 2011 and will be open to wider participation from the remaining African Union member states.

The AU Commissioner for Human Resources Science and Technology and the Chief Executive Officer of the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency will launch the African Innovation Outlook Series and officially launch the second phase of the ASTII project during the workshop.

### **The ASTII Initiative**

The investment in Science Technology and Innovation (STI) is seen by African countries as an essential element in responding to Africa's socio-economic development needs and challenges. Various platforms held at national, regional and continental level have echoed

the need for committed investment to STI. Notable among these is the Addis Ababa Declaration on Science, Technology and Scientific Research for Development made at the African Union (AU) Summit in January 2007 in which heads of states committed to promote and support research and innovation activities and the development of the requisite human and institutional capacities.

Most recently, the AU Summit of January/February 2009 resolved to establish the African Observatory for Science, Technology and Innovation (AOSTI) in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea ( Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.232 (XII) of February 2009). The Observatory will play the main role of coordination, data collection, training, and information dissemination on STI in Africa.

Africa's Science & Technology Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA) was adopted in 2005 as a framework that articulates Africa's vision for applying science, technology and innovation in its development agenda and for Africa's full integration into the world economy. The African Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators Initiative (ASTII) is a flagship programme of the CPA which, among other things, aims at supporting evidence-based policy that addresses Africa's development challenges in the context of STI. ASTII was designed to encompass two inter-related projects which are: (i) the development and adoption of African common science, technology and Innovation indicators and (ii) the establishment of the African STI Observatory.

As stated in the CPA, the overall goal of ASTII is to contribute to improving the quality of STI policies at national, regional and continental level by strengthening Africa's capacity to develop and use STI indicators. The initiative therefore focuses on the following four specific objectives:

- To develop and cause the adoption of internationally comparable STI indicators
- To build human and institutional capacities for developing and using STI indicators, as well as conducting related surveys
- To enable African countries to participate in international programmes for STI indicators
- To inform African countries on the state of STI on the continent.

The first phase of ASTII was implemented in 19 AU member states and was coordinated by the NEPAD Agency with political support from the Directorate of Human Resources, Science and Technology of the African Union Commission (AUC-HRST). The participating countries were: Algeria, Angola, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia. Financial and technical resources for ASTII came from the participating countries and through a grant from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

(Sida). Participating countries conducted Research and Development (R&D) and Innovation surveys the outcomes of which are captured in the African Innovation Outlook (AIO).

ASTII was implemented through designated Focal Points at national levels coupled with coordination at continental level AUC–HRST and the then NEPAD Office of Science and Technology.

Notable achievements of ASTII to date are:

- The establishment of Focal Points to spearhead the production of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) indicators at national level
- Capacity building in STI data collection
- The publication of the African Innovation Outlook (AIO) 2010
- The development of the ASTII information System (web platform) which will be used during phase-2

The implementation of the ASTII programme encountered some challenges which need to be addressed in order for the ASTII programme to play a meaningful role in supporting policy formulation and implementation for the socio- economic transformation of the continent.

The challenges encountered in phase one include:

- limited human capacity at national level in order to conduct R&D and innovation surveys, analyze the results thereof and sustain the production and dissemination of reliable, relevant and timely STI statistics;
- limited political & civic buy-in which may affect the prioritization of STI for development;
- the high cost of bandwidth which restrains web-access and the dissemination of relevant STI information;
- the absence, in many cases, of national budget-lines and the lack of alternative financial support at the national level which limits the scope of programme activities and may affect the sustainability of regular R&D and Innovation data being produced by African countries and institutions.

Despite these challenges, great opportunities are emerging as the programme implementation unfolds. The measurements of STI as support tools for policy formulation and implementation have opened areas for further research and debate. Participating countries are collaborating on STI matters and building a community of practice which will

ensure that Africa speaks with one voice. Further, there are requests from AU member states willing to join the ASTII programme in its second phase. Amongst the development partners, Sida has come forth in continued support of the ASTII for the next three years.

The African Innovation Outlook 2010 is published as the first in a series, intended to inform the people of Africa and other interested parties about STI activities in African countries. The availability and usage of the African Innovation Outlook is expected to generate debate, which will enrich the process of collecting better quality data and improve understanding of policy processes in Africa. The debate is expected to contribute to African solutions to African problems and influence the work on STI indicators.

Another significant opportunity is the establishment of the African Observatory on Science Technology and Innovation (AOSTI) which has been concretized by the signing of a host country agreement between the government of Equatorial Guinea and the African Union Commission. The NEPAD Agency, the African Union Commission and the Office of the President of the Republic of Equatorial responsible for AOSTI project are collaborating in order to make the AOSTI operational.

### **Workshop Objectives**

The workshop has two broad objectives: the launch of the African Innovation Outlook Series and the second phase of the ASTII programme and capacity building for existing and potential entrants to ASTII phase 2 . Specific objectives of the workshop are:

- to consolidate the outcomes of the first phase
- to share lessons learned with a view to addressing the challenges encountered
- to discuss the sustainability and reliability of an ASTII data infrastructure
- to agree on a road map for scaling up the initiative to all AU member states as well as widening the scope of the project
- To explore linkages between ASTII and other STI initiatives

Guided by these objectives, it is expected that the meeting will achieve the following outputs:

- recommendations regarding the production of high quality STI statistics vis-a-vis capacity building, financing of surveys and national institutionalisation of ASTII processes

- recommendations as to how the STI statistics and data can be translated into meaningful policy directives
- recommendations on harmonisation and coordination mechanisms between in-country STI processes, other STI initiatives and ASTII.

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