



**EU-Africa High Level Policy Dialogue
on Science, Technology and Innovation
1st Senior Officials meeting
10-11 October 2011, Addis Ababa,
Ethiopia**

OPENING SPEECH

**H.E. Prof. J. P. Ezin
COMMISSIONER FOR
HUMAN RESOURCES, SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

[Salutation.....

**Excellencies
Distinguished Delegates,**

Ladies and gentlemen], it is my pleasure on behalf of the African Union Commission, and the Chairperson of Commission H.E. Dr. Jean Ping, to warmly welcome you all distinguished Senior Officials from Europe, Africa and Partner Organizations. Welcome to Addis Ababa and to the Headquarters of the African Union. I would like to thank the two Commissions for organizing this important event.

We are holding this “*High Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation*” within the framework of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. It is indeed one of the components for building a “solid framework for long-term strategic, systematic and well integrated

cooperation” between our two continents. We should, through this platform explore how we could jointly use our partnership as a tool to tackle the development challenges and address the key priorities of mutual interest between our continents.

I am pleased that after the adoption of the Joint Africa-EU Strategy and its Plan of Action by the Heads of State and Government of Europe and Africa in Lisbon in December 2007, the European Commission and African Union Commission have remained seized and committed to its implementation. This has opened unique opportunities for us to address common contemporary challenges together. The 8th Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space of the Joint Strategy, is perhaps one of the few that have made

significant progress and have moved far ahead of others.

Concrete initiatives aimed at building Africa’s capacities were identified within the first Action Plan based on the Africa’s Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA), and the ongoing consultation for GMES and Africa. In order to fast-track and expedite the implementation of this partnership, we agreed at College-to-College level in 2008, to consider the “the book of 19 lighthouse projects” as a tool for dialoguing. We quickly identified six projects as early deliverables and immediately swung into implementation:

- The AU Commission launched the Research Grants Project in December 2010 to support collaborative research on Africa’s

science and technology policy; and capacity building for the Commission to create a credible and competitive system of grants management as an innovative way to involve African citizens to work together on common development priorities. The Commission, with the support of the EC both in Brussels and the Delegation in Addis Ababa, designed the first AU Open Call for Research Proposals valued at about €7 million to finance research in Post-harvest and Agriculture; Renewable and Sustainable Energy; and Water and Sanitation. A second Call of the same magnitude will be published later this year. The long term view is for this project to evolve into a durable pan African Research Framework Programme. This requires full engagement of all

key stakeholders particularly the Member States.

To be exhaustive, I will mention the Kwame Nkrumah Scientific Awards launched in 2009 and fully funded so far by the European Commission.

- Africa's research agenda was also further boosted by the European Commission through the launch of a multi-disciplinary FP7 Special call for Africa amounting €72 million in September 2010. This Call was designed to support research efforts to meet the challenges for Water, Food Security and better Health including the environment and climate change in Africa.
- In the space domain, Africa stands to draw expertise from the European Union through various cooperation

frameworks particularly, the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security/GMES and Africa, which is gradually finding its way to Africa; to spread satellite based technologies to the benefit of specific African development objectives. We must expedite the implementation of this initiative through the development of a comprehensive Action Plan and availing the much needed resources.

The concrete project-oriented approach developed throughout the implementation of the Partnership No. 8 Action Plan allowed us to trigger a sound mobilization of relevant EU and African stakeholders across the priority actions of the Partnership. A number of structuring initiatives, including this High-level Policy Dialogue, have been launched to support and enhance our cooperation.

Member States from both continents, including other stakeholders, have always been involved in the process through the informal Joint Expert Groups, JEG8 in particular. Some Member States have taken bold steps to champion the implementation and are availing resources to some of our flagship projects. The role of the Regional Economic Communities in Africa, as fundamental pillars for the execution of our programme should be enhanced in this phase in order to increase the impact of the partnership.

This High Level Policy Dialogue platform is for you to define common priorities, explore synergies, share best practices, foster operational links, and strengthen the overall cooperation framework. The 3rd EU-Africa Joint Summit in Tripoli in November 2010

endorsed this initiative underscoring the need to strengthen and accelerate the cooperation between Europe and Africa in science and technology. Your participation will enhance this cooperation, as you look at the fundamental issues regarding socio-economic challenges, capacity building on research infrastructures, human capital development and other cross-cutting and policy matters.

You may agree with me that increasing investment and funding for science and technology is a key contributor to socio-economic development and this is critical at this stage as we are in the midst of setting objectives and priorities for our cooperation. We have to explore various possible and alternative sources of funding in order for us to approach research sustainably.

The development of the requisite human capital to sustain our efforts remains a critical challenge to all of us. The African Union Commission believe its Pan African University Initiative will act as a grooming ground of high calibre critical mass of researchers and will be the continental hub for a purpose driven research with a view to bridge the technological gap between countries and regions within Africa and between Africa and other continents.

It will promote science and technology on the continent and link scientific research to economic development. It will also enhance universities to deliver quality education and training; research; and give public service to the African communities. As a network of thematic universities and satellite campuses identified from excelling existing institutions, the Pan African University

Initiative will focus on priority thematic areas of Basic Sciences, Technology and Innovation; Water and Energy (including climate change); Life and Earth Sciences (including health and agriculture); Space Sciences and finally, Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences.

With these remarks let me wish you successful deliberations and fruitful outcomes especially with innovative funding mechanisms to sustain our joint efforts for the development of Science and Technology.

God bless Africa.

I thank you.