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**ORDINARY SESSION FOR  
THE 2<sup>nd</sup> SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (STC-EST 2)  
21-23 October 2017, CAIRO, EGYPT**

**En**

**Speech by H.E Prof Sarah Anyang Agbor  
Commissioner, Human Resources, Science and Technology**

## **Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to this very 2<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST2). Please accept greetings from the chairperson of the African Union Commission H.E Mr. Moussa Faki Mahatma who extends greetings of peace, solidarity and good will. He extends appreciation to the Government of the Arab Republic of Egypt, who have at such a short notice graciously agreed to host this meeting. In the same light i am highly gratified to the organizers for the warmth and hospitality given to us.

## **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The AUC is the secretariat of AU and is responsible for providing political and policy leadership for implementations of strategies. One of our specific roles is amongst others “*convening meetings of STC and ensuring resolutions of such meetings are transmitted to the AU summits*”. This is why this meeting is crucial. An African

proverb says *“for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepared for it today”*.

In October 2015, we all gathered in Addis Ababa for our very first session of the Specialised Technical Committee for Science Technology and Innovation. We were able to discuss the place of Education, Science and technology in achieving Agenda 2063, **the Africa We Want**.

Following the recommendations of the first STC-EST, a number of strategic instruments and decisions on Education, Science, Technology and Innovation were considered and adopted by AU Heads of State and Government during the January 2016 Summit. The specific outcomes include the adoption of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (**CESA 16-25**); the African Space Policy and Strategy; and the statutes of the Pan-African University (revised), Pan-African Intellectual Property Organization (PAIPO), the African Scientific Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC) and the African Observatory on Science, Technology and Innovation (AOSTI).

Since then, a series of important steps have been taken to get implementation off to the best possible start.

Today we have convened for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the STC-EST2 to look back and assess progress made; while also looking ahead and proposing concrete ideas towards breaking through challenges and moving towards our great goals: not only to elect a new Bureau but also for you to consider the draft statutes of African Space Agency, the African Union International Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA) in order to submit them to the next STC on Justice and Legal Affairs and subsequently to the January 2018 Summit. This STC-EST2 will also review the implementation progress of the instruments and decisions adopted during 2016 and 2017 Heads of States Summits as it relates to Education, Science and Technology.

In terms of our progress, I wish to state that the Commission has within last two years made unprecedented successes in some of our activities, for example:

- The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) was developed and adopted by the AU January 2016 Summit. This is in line with Agenda 2063, which underlines that Africa's human capital will be fully developed as its most precious resource, through sustained investments based on universal early childhood development and basic education, and sustained investments in higher education, science, technology, research and innovation, and the elimination of gender disparities at all levels of education. The implementation of CESA is coordinated through a Coalition of Partners and Stakeholders working in education in Africa, as called for by the AU Summit of July 2014, organized into Thematic Clusters.
- In view of the AU Executive Council Decision on establishing a Continental Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, and in line with harmonisation of African Higher Education, the Commission initiated

the development of a Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), in collaboration with the European Commission and the Association of African Universities. This was adopted by the AU Assembly during the 2016 January Summit. Development of a continental Credit Transfer System is also underway.

- The AU Summit in January 2016 also took a decision establishing African School Feeding Day to be observed on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March every year. The first observance was carried out in Niger in 2016, and the second one in Brazzaville in 2017 with several Member States and partners participating with the AUC. A Study has been carried out to map out school feeding in Member States in a bid to draw lessons for strengthening the practice, in view of the multi-sectoral benefits of school feeding.

- To implement the Summit decision on Teacher Development, a seminal study was carried out on the Training, Working and Living Conditions of Teachers in Member States. The Study called for far reaching recommendations which, when implemented will raise not only the quality of education but also especially the professional status of teachers in Africa
  
- With regards to the African Union - International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (AU/CIEFFA), the international professional staff have been recruited and since assumed their posts in their duty stations as from August 2016. Moreover, the centre has developed a Strategic Plan from 2015-2017 in line with one of the aspirations of Agenda 2063, which is empowerment of girls and women.
  
- Following the decision of the January 2016 Summit on the proposed amendments of the Pan African University Statute, members of the PAU Council, the PAU Senate and the PAU Institute Boards were

appointed and the Council, the Senate as well as the Institute Boards have been holding their regular meetings.

- To support Research in Africa, the Commission received 17.5 million Euros in 2016 to launch two more Calls to support research in response to priority 1 of STISA 2024 and the first priority of the EU-Africa roadmap for Research and Innovation. An open call for proposal was launched in May 2016 on the theme **Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture**. About nine beneficiaries of this grant will be announced by the end of October 2017 and each will receive minimum of 500,000 USD and a maximum of 1000,000 USD to do research in Africa and on problem areas relevant to the continent.
- Also worth mentioning is that in April 2016 in Addis Ababa, the senior officials of EU-Africa HLPD adopted the Roadmap towards a jointly co-owned EU-Africa Research & Innovation Partnership on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture.



This Roadmap which is well-aligned to our development goals focuses on Sustainable Intensification; Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition, Expansion and Improvement of Agricultural Markets and Trade and cross-cutting issues that include innovation and entrepreneurship. Similarly, under this partnership, a second priority theme for **Joint Cooperation on Climate Change and Sustainable Energy** has been developed and was endorsed during the senior officials' meeting of both AU and EU from October 17-18, 2017 in Brussels.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

These advances have been achieved in part because we work together. The enormous potential of Science, Technology, Innovation and Education to drive the Agenda 2063 and shape our economy is unquestionable. Although we have made progress, our progress can only be meaningful when the lives of majority in the society is touched with a visible economic growth. In my opinion a lot still needs to be done for us to evidently impact our

continent. We still have room to clearly outline concrete measures to enhance our common goals. Key among our challenges have been ownership by Member States; financing and staffing levels.

For an effective implementation of our Continental Strategies, towards an integrated and prosperous continent requires:

- First and foremost ownership of the continental programmes which reflect the collective aspirations of Member States
- Clear commitment to provide financial support for the various initiatives;
- More coherence and synergy in the support policies of our regional and international partners, even as we acknowledge and appreciate their on-going support; and
- Inclusion of the wider communities, particularly the under-represented groups among women and youth.

Excellencies, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, with about 60% of Africa population under the age of 15, the

anticipated growth of our population can be a challenge but it also presents a major opportunity. Investments in Education and STI will be key in ensuring that Africa realizes a demographic dividend as the youthful population become empowered citizens, entrepreneurs, researchers, innovators and leaders in every field of endeavor. The jobs of the future demand more focus on STEM education and ICTs. A paradigm shift in provision of Technical and Vocational Education and Training will be imperative in ensuring that every TVET graduate is a potential employer rather than a job seeker. Life skills and value education will promote peaceful responsible citizenship with healthy minds and bodies. Linking research agenda to Agenda 2063 through implementation of STISA and promotion of intra-african collaboration will help to nurture creative ecosystems for realizing advances in scientific discoveries and new technologies to solve African problems, while optimizing use of Africa's resources through value chain development.

That is to say that if we provide the enabling environment, the youth population will be the new breed of innovators

who will convert the continent's challenges and latent potential into inclusive prosperity and sustainable development. Indeed, as the rest of the world grows old, Africa is poised to be a most important source of high level skill, intellectual capital and knowledge products for the rest of the world.

It is Proactive STI and Education policies that will ensure that more people move out of poverty in our continent. We all know that Education and STI are the keys to unlocking the golden door of freedom from poverty and bedrock of social and economic development. However, it is sad to say that the annual survey of African countries undertaken by the ACBF in 2016 to assess capacity needs in priority STI areas showed that 91% of African countries still consider training a high or very high priority area in STI. The study further showed that Africa may be short of 4.3 million engineers and 1.6 million agricultural scientists and researchers, in part because more than 80% of current student's enrolments are in social sciences and humanities. This ordinary session should reflect on the

blue prints for advancing Education, Science and Technology.

Our various continental frameworks developed should be considered as instruments of collaboration among Member States, entrepreneurs, scientists, creators and innovators across the world for the implementation of Agenda 2063.

As you very well know, the Commission, since 2015 has been publishing a report of annual continental activities (RACA) which is distributed to Heads of States during January summit. I will like to use this opportunity to remind Member states, RECs and partners to submit inputs to the 2017 edition.

To conclude, Ladies and gentlemen, we must move beyond rhetoric and that protects an inclination towards business-as-usual, and instead use this opportunity of being together to come up with concrete ideas for achieving the African we want by 2063. If Africa has to emerge by 2063, then we need an implementation strategy Enough is Enough to policies, decisions, meetings that have become cemeteries of ideas & innovation. Let us together shake off the dust of this

lethargy, this somnambulism, this bureaucracy of 100% talks and 0% implementation.

Each and every one of us here, each and every Member State in this great continent has a responsibility to implement the various strategies that will make us emerge by 2063. That way is through science, technology & innovation. We are not talking about rocket science but science contextualized to our present needs as advocated by STISA 2024 seen through Biotechnology, Biocompetencies & molecular science.

Today I join my voice with the voices of great Pan African men & women who have fought for a change in Africa, a change from colonialism to independence, a change from mediocrity to Excellence. We have to take a specific stand and take concrete, applicable and doable steps that can make Africa emergent by 2063. So Help us God.

Once again, I welcome all of you and look forward to fruitful results from your discussions today and tomorrow.