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**African Union - European Union High Level Policy Dialogue  
(HLPD) on Science, Technology and Innovation  
Special focus on Joint AU-EU Innovation  
Agenda  
27 January 2022 (11:00-13:00 Addis Ababa time)**

**Brief Address by  
H.E. Prof. Mohammed Belhocine  
Commissioner for Education, Science, Technology and  
Innovation**

- **H.E. Ms Birgitte Markussen**, Ambassador, EU Delegation to the African Union Commission
- **Ms Claire Giry**, Director-General Research and Innovation, Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation of France, Presidency of the Council of the EU
- **Prof. Amadou Abdoul Sow**, Member of the Bureau of AU Specialized Technical Committee On Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST)
- **Ms Maria Cristina Russo**, Director International cooperation, European Commission (EC), DG Research and Innovation (chair)
- **Dr. Mahama Ouedraogo**, Director for Human Resources, Science and Technology Department,
- Senior Officials from AU and EU Member States
- Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It is my pleasure and honour to join this 6<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials Session of the AU- EU High-level Policy Dialogue on science, technology and innovation. As this is my very first time as Commissioner ESTI to address you, let me convey my warm greetings and best wishes of the new year to you all. Allow me also to thank you for the work you are doing since Lisbon 2007, when we adopted the AU-EU Joint Strategy. This strategy underlines the need for us to forge together a new and stronger partnership for a long-term, systematic and well-integrated cooperation. Indeed, science, technology and innovation (STI), are enablers for achieving our mutual socio-economic development goals, building on our vast existing ecosystems of both bilateral and

multilateral relationships, driven by our shared values, common interests and policy imperatives.

2. The High-Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) is a critical platform for our STI cooperation. It enhances our dialogue through promoting better common understanding, building mutual trust and ownership of our partnership, and for defining and setting priorities for our cooperation. We have achieved a lot through this dialogue, including the launch of a number of initiatives. We adopted two *Roadmaps* towards a jointly co-owned AU-EU Research & Innovation Partnerships: The first one on Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture. Agricultural sector plays a pivotal role for our social and economic development. The African Union designated “**Building resilience in nutrition on the African continent**” as theme of this year! The second roadmap relates to “Climate Change and Sustainable Energy”. It will enable us to collectively deal with Climate Action for adaptation and mitigation, as well as Sustainable Energy. This is also within AU and EU priorities; and in line with Global Agreements, in particular the Paris Agreement and with the Sustainable Development Goals that call for the transition to low-carbon and climate resilient economies.
3. Today we are gathered to consider the Joint AU-EU Innovation Agenda as an axis of our cooperation. We believe that this Innovation Agenda will create a huge growth potential for the innovation ecosystems from Africa and Europe to contribute to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the African Union Agenda 2063, the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024), and the EU communications on the “Comprehensive Strategy with Africa” and the “Global Approach to Research and Innovation”. It

will deepen dialogue and engagement between policy-makers and innovators, remove barriers, and close gaps that impede innovation and creativity. Innovation is a huge economic opportunity, for business and entrepreneurship development. In Africa, we would like for example the innovation and tech-hubs to make use of initiatives such as the Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA), and the Digital Transformation Strategy, among others.

4. As I am coming as Commissioner ESTI, one of my tasks is to setup and develop the human capital and innovation unit within the department. Surely this underlines the importance of innovation which has brought our member states not only to consider it within the department, but to give clear instruction for its urgent operationalization. In connecting the dots, the commission will work diligently to develop the African innovation strategy as a continental policy framework to tap the African youth creativity into transforming ideas, inventions and technologies to solving problems faced by the people. This will also lead to the creation of a conducive environment for Africa to develop and sustain innovation platforms and enhance job creation and income generation for the African people.

5. As you may recall the first ever Research and Innovation Ministerial Meeting of the AU-EU High-Level Policy Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation in July 2020, agreed to focus our cooperation on four priority areas, namely:

- Public Health,
- Green transition,
- Innovation & Technology,
- and Capacities for Science.

The Joint Innovation Agenda directly responds to the implementation of this recommendation, to foster collaboration alliances, reciprocal knowledge transfer based on community networks, capacity building and business creation and provision of support to incubators and accelerators, as well as connecting technology hubs across Africa and Europe.

**6.** Finally, I wish to conclude by thanking the Working Group from both regions for diligently consolidating this draft AU-EU Joint Innovation Agenda that we have before us.

**7.** I thank you and wish you fruitful deliberations.