

***New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)
Statement of Commitments Workshop on Developing a Science
and Technology Framework for NEPAD. Johannesburg 17-19, February***

Preamble

NEPAD is the hoped for "a Renaissance" that will "give hope to the emaciated African child that the 21st century is indeed Africa's century." (Thambo Mbeki)

Subscribing to the principles of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), we the representatives of founding member states, national and regional economic bodies, and intergovernmental organizations and partners, meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa on February 17-19, 2003 at this first workshop on developing science and technology framework for NEPAD;

Reaffirm the important role that science and technology plays in human development and Africa's economic, social and political transformation;

Stress that the pace of economic globalisation is now largely influenced by, *inter alia*, rapid advances in science and technology and that Africa must ensure benefit from the opportunities offered by globalisation and minimize the risks of marginalisation;

Express our concern over the continued inadequacy of financial and organizational resources for fostering Africa's scientific and technological development, and the recognizing the urgency to build political commitment to increase financial resources both public and private for scientific research and innovation;

Stress the need to establish science and technology as a cross-cutting and multi-sectoral theme within the framework and implementation plans of NEPAD, particularly

through effective and better planning, integration and coordination, including regional cooperation in science and technology,

Reaffirm our commitment to implement the provisions of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals;

Recognize the Cape Town Declaration on Research for Sustainable Development adopted at the ministerial meeting of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States;

Recognize the importance of establishing and strengthening cooperation and partnerships among public and private sectors, civil society and academic institutions in Africa, and enhancing South-South and South-North science and technology cooperation;

Noting with concern that:

1. There is need to build a knowledge and information base on the nature and status of scientific and innovative activities being conducted by national and regional research institutions in Africa.
2. There is need to network and maximize synergy among research institutions within and across national boundaries.
3. The link between scientific institutions and industry is still weak; and in many instances there are gaps between activities of the scientific institutions and overall economic and industrial development aspirations of countries.
4. The potential of science and technology to address issues of poverty continues to be

underestimated, and emphasis is still placed on outdated notions of technology transfer in development strategies.

5. The increasing outward mobility and loss of African scientists to the rest of the world requires, inter alia, urgent attention. There is need to establish conducive conditions to retain and effectively utilize African scientific expertise on the continent and in the diaspora.

6. There is a need to stimulate interest in and improve the quality of science education at all levels in many African states.

7. A number of African countries are making significant progress to increase investment in and improve the quality of their science and technology systems. However, many of them have so far not been able to achieve their goal/aspiration to devote at least 1% of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to R&D activities.

We hereby acknowledge the need to:

- Establish processes for strategic review of national policies, strategies and performance on science, mathematics and engineering education with the support of the countries. These processes need to urgently target countries where limited data is available.

- Establish processes for comprehensive review of Africa's science and technology status, research capacities in key fields relevant to the strategic goals and programmes of NEPAD with the support of individual countries. The reviews should be phased in such a way as to provide the basis for identifying science and technology inputs to NEPAD priority programmes.

- Consistent and ongoing efforts should be made to mainstream science and technology in NEPAD's sectoral programmes on health, agriculture, education, environment, governance, infrastructure, security, investment, trade and others.

- Strengthen and where necessary create centres and networks of excellence in support of the broad objective of science and technology institution building and human resource development critical to the achievement of Africa's interests in the global context.
- Where appropriate, we will develop and adopt concrete regional scientific research and innovation programmes on, for example, biotechnology, indigenous knowledge, desertification, information and communication technologies and space science, among others, to address the challenges of poverty reduction as well as other problems and opportunities agreed upon within the NEPAD framework.
- Develop a data resource and supporting systems leading to dynamic and responsive sets of indicators for setting strategies, monitoring performance and assessing impacts.
- NEPAD should establish an open forum to engage all stakeholders in constructive dialogue on ways and means of strengthening Africa's scientific and technological base.
- Establish knowledge-based processes to develop a science agenda that will bring about rapid technological development of the continent, for example enhancing industrial production by targeting small and medium enterprises (SMEs).
- Ensure that sustained attention is directed to capacity development of science and technology systems, institutions and practitioners.

Accordingly, **we recommend** that appropriate organs of NEPAD and where necessary other competent and interested entities commit themselves to:

- (a) Establish, in response to the November 2002 Abuja Declaration of ministers and senior policy-makers, a High-level Forum on Science and Technology. The Forum should be composed of African ministers of science and technology, and/or presidential

science advisors. It should be supported by senior policy-makers and will engage in dialogue and decision-making on effective means of building the continents scientific and technological development. The High-level Forum on Science and Technology should where required transmit its resolutions to the NEPAD Heads of State Implementation Committee.

(b) Establish a panel or working group of eminent African experts drawn from communities of scientists, industry, policy-makers and practitioners to provide policy, strategic and technical advice to the High-level Forum. The panel or working group should propose a NEPAD science and technology programmatic framework. In conducting its work, it should draw on the existing national, regional and international resources. African countries should be enabled to participate in particular initiatives at their discretion.

(c) Set up an electronic platform, meetings and workshops as appropriate to facilitate dialogue and engage all stakeholders to develop a common vision, agenda and action plan to promote and sustain Africa's scientific and technological development.

(d) Provide technical, administrative and financial support to enable the operations of the above recommended structures.

(e) Commit to a firm timetable and timely action to realize the above recommendations.

Source: SciDev.Net

For more information, you can consult the NEPAD Discussion Homepage of SciDev.Net:

http://www.scidevforum.net/forum/list.php?bn=scidevforum_sustain

'Roadmap' proposed for science in Africa

Tamar Kahn

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[JOHANNESBURG] Representatives from a group of major African countries have adopted what one participant described as a “roadmap” for the development of science and technology on the continent, as well as a strategy for pushing science and technology higher up the agenda of national governments.

In order to help achieve these goals, they have also agreed to set up a continent-wide ‘forum’ on science and technology, to be made up of African science ministers and presidential science advisers.

The agreement on these initiatives came yesterday (19 February) at the end of a three-day workshop in Johannesburg on the role of science and technology in the New Economic Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

The new science forum will be set up within NEPAD — which is expected to spearhead social and economic development across Africa — and will report to a secretariat being established at the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research in Pretoria, South Africa.

It will be advised by a panel of experts, including scientists, industrialists and policy makers, who will be given the task of developing a NEPAD science and technology “programmatic framework”. This is expected to bear many similarities to the multi-year Framework programme, first launched in the early 1980s, which is used to fund research programmes through the European Commission in Brussels.

The Johannesburg workshop was hosted by the South African Department of Science and Technology, and attended by more than 80 science policy experts and government

officials from countries across Africa. These included four of the five founding nations of NEPAD, namely South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Egypt. (A delegation from Senegal failed to show up.)

In an opening address, Ben Ngubane, South Africa's Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, said that the participants had a mission "to ensure that we leverage resources nationally, regionally and continentally ... and to commit ourselves to [developing] a knowledge base for a more equitable, prosperous and sustainable Africa".

Ngubane said that Africa should take heed of the lessons learnt in Europe, where knowledge and innovation "underpinned by intergovernmental instruments" remain the key drivers of economic growth.

"The truth is that if we want to transcend the scourge of poverty and disease, the only viable modality open to Africa and the rest of the developing world is the creation of regional and sub-regional growth and development strategies, sustained by a new global partnership in science and technology."

There was a high level of agreement among the delegates on such sentiments as they discussed the role of science and technology in improving the lives of African people within the context of NEPAD, emphasising that science and technology were an essential element for development, rather than a reward for it.

"The most important thing about this meeting is that it gives us a roadmap with which to craft a wider African process around science and technology," said Adi Paterson, chief operating officer in the South African Department of Science and Technology.

Keen to draw up a broad declaration that would spell out areas of common concern while avoiding either internal or external tensions, the delegates shied away from controversial topics such as intellectual property rights.

Instead, the consensus document that they adopted highlights concerns that face the continent as a whole, such as the exodus of skilled scientists, poor quality science education, and the low level of investment in science and technology as a percentage of GDP.

Delegates resolved to conduct a review of Africa's policies and performance in science, mathematics and engineering education. They also plan to review the research taking place on the continent to see whether it meshes with NEPAD's priorities, and to ensure that science and technology are integrated into NEPAD's sectoral programmes on health, agriculture, education, environment, governance, infrastructure, security, investment and trade.

Finally the delegates agreed to strengthen scientific 'centres of excellence' and regional research networks throughout Africa. The declaration does not detail specific priority areas, leaving this to national governments. But it does emphasise broad areas that could benefit from regional co-operation, including desertification, biotechnology, space science and information technology.

Source: SciDev.Net

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Jérôme GERARD

Agent de recherche et d'information / Research and Information Officer

CRDI Bureau régional / IDRC Regional Office

BP 11007 CD Annexe

Dakar - SENEGAL

Tel: (221) 864 00 00 # 2074

Fax : (221) 825 32 55

Email: jgerard@idrc.org.sn

Web: <http://www.idrc.ca/braco>
