



Press release

For immediate release

African Ministers commit to strengthening science and technology in Africa to boost employment and growth

Nairobi, April 11, 2012. Over 30 African Ministers of Education and Science attending the First African Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for Youth Employment, Human Capital Development and Inclusive Growth, unanimously pledged to put STI policies, strategies, programs and plans into action in the next 5 years.

The Forum ended on April 3rd, after a two-day experts' meeting (April 1-2, 2012) and a one-day Ministerial Conference (April 3, 2012) presided over by the President of Kenya, His Excellency Mwai Kibaki.

The Experts' Meeting considered strengthening STI by improving science, technology and mathematics education (STEM), enhancing scientific research and ensuring that higher education systems are equipped to meet the demand for jobs, especially among youth. It also highlighted successful experiences on how to nurture innovation and entrepreneurship, tap into existing STI knowledge and cultivate a dynamic innovation eco-system in Africa. Participants also reflected and agreed upon initiatives for harnessing global innovative solutions to address development challenges in agriculture, health, water and energy, and ICT sectors.

The Ministerial conference gathering approximately 700 participants focused on the integration of STI policies in national and regional development agendas as well as STI financing mechanisms and investments.

“In spite of the progress that has been made, much more needs to be done to ensure that Africa becomes a global hub for innovations. An important strategy in this connection is the urgent need to control and reverse the massive brain drain out of the continent. We need policies and infrastructure for research and development that will attract and retain top-notch scientists”, noted H.E. President Kibaki in his opening remarks.

African Development Bank President Donald Kaberuka challenged African nations to look at STI as a means of creating wealth in their countries through entrepreneurship and innovation to ensure inclusive growth and sustainability, and to move away from finite inherited wealth (like oil and minerals), which can cause economic disruptions. He stressed the importance for Africa to commercialize its own innovations and to expand financial services for innovation. He also indicated that by 2030, 1 of 4 young people in the world will be African, representing the largest work force in the world. *“It is unacceptable that African parents have to use their life savings or sell their land to send their children to universities abroad to get a good quality education and secure a decent job. We need to step up investments in scientific research at home. The best of us study abroad and stay abroad. We need to find ways to bring our best people back”*, said President Kaberuka underscoring the need for education reforms to address the demographic challenge and give access to all especially the poorest.

“Africa is on the move today. Science, technology and innovation is vital to maintaining this momentum. Our vision is clear, but we must do more to defend it -- social equity, environmental protection and sustainable, green economic development are part of a single agenda”, said Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO. *“We need an integrated scientific research agenda to better understand the world, to identify boundaries and tipping points.”*

The Deputy Chairman of the African Union Commission Erastus Mwencha also affirmed the African Union’s support towards making Africa self-sustainable in STI.

The Ministerial conference concluded with the signing of the Nairobi Ministerial Declaration on Science, Technology and Innovation as well as an award ceremony for the top five Kenyan exhibitors who participated in “Africa on the Move - Showcasing Africa’s innovations”, an open exhibition organized during the STI forum in fields ranging from ICT applications to health, agriculture and education. H.E President Kibaki presented the awards.

The Ministerial declaration includes a range of measures to harness STI for sustainable development. (See *Declaration on the First Africa STI Forum web site at: <http://www.adeanet.org/STIforum/en/content/nairobi-ministerial-declaration>*)

The outcomes and recommendations of the Forum including the Ministerial Declaration will contribute to forthcoming STI initiatives, including the African Development Bank’s Annual Meetings in May 2012, the African Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology (AMCOST) Conference in May 2012, and the “Science with Africa” Meeting in June 2012.

This three-day forum was hosted by the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. It was organized by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the African Union (AU), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA).

As a build-up of activities to the STI Forum, on March 31, ADEA organized a one-day training workshop for over 30 African journalists.

Media contacts:

- **Pénélope Pontet de Fouquières**, Media Relations Officer, Tunis, African Development Bank, Tel. (direct) : +216 71 10 12 50 / (mob) : +216 24 66 36 96 and **Dieter Gijbsbrechts**, African Development Bank, d.gijbsbrechts@afdb.org
- **Agnès Bardon**, UNESCO Press Service, Paris. Tel: +33 (0) 1 45 68 17 64, a.bardon@unesco.org
- **Elizabeth Mwakelemu-Tole**, UNESCO Nairobi Office: Tel: +254 20 762 12 54, e.mwakelemutole@unesco.org
- **Argut Kipturgo**, Public Communications, Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, Nairobi. Cell Phone: 0721 576 718, turgoar@gmail.com
- **Thanh-Hoa Desruelles**, Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), t.desruelles@afdb.org, Tel: +216/ 71 10 34 32
- **Evelyn AkothWatta**, Nairobi, Kenya, Tel: + 254 722 810 565 e-mail: evelynwatta@gmail.com

