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African Science, Technology & Innovation Indicators (ASTII) Initiative

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[SALUTATION]

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to this workshop to launch the second phase of the African Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators Initiative (ASTII) and publication of the first African STI Outlook. We may recall that, NEPAD Planning & Coordinating Agency Science and Technology Sector, as a Programme of the African Union embarked on this project as direct response to implement the recommendations of AMCOST I in 2003, and AMCOST II in 2005. The Ministers in charge of Science and Technology called for the development and adoption of a common set of indicators to benchmark our national and regional systems of innovations, and to inform policy and programme formulation. The ASTII project is well articulated in Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action, our common platform for science policy and programmes in Africa.

The first meeting on STI was held in Mozambique in 2007. Since then, NEPAD with the support of the AUC-HRST has been executing STI training workshops, specifically tailor-made to build the capacities of our Member States to play a key role in this programme. Today is indeed an auspicious occasion as we are gathered here to launch the second phase of the African Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators Initiative (ASTII) and witness the publication of the first African STI Outlook as an output of the first phase.

Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to underscore and applaud the role of our development partners, to mention particularly, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) for supporting this programme. Sida has been along with us since the beginning of this programme. In this regard, I urge the NEPAD Office of Science and Technology to continue the good work it is doing to ensure that Africa can quantitatively and qualitatively gauge its development through the ASTII Initiative. I wish to also thank UNESCO for its technical support, as well as the ASTII Faculty for the knowledge its members are sharing with the ASTII Community.

We envisage this programme to go a step further and evolve into an African institution on STI data. To this note, we are happy that the Heads of State and Government have already taken a decision that enables Africa to own its STI Observatory as a single continental repository for STI data. We are working again with NEPAD, the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, the host, and other stakeholders towards the creation of an African Observatory for Science, Technology and Innovation.

The Observatory will provide continuous and comprehensive STI statistics across the continent, and will further assist Member States and the RECs in identifying programme and policy gaps. It will provide tools and indicators for strategic thinking, to link science to sustainable development opportunities, through an outlook of STI mapping. The ASTII programme indeed will form the content of African Observatory.

At the African Union level, we strive to make informed decisions for improving the well being of the African citizens. In our ever-changing and complex environment, the missing ingredient has been a home-grown evidence based framework to support our policy debate.

The AU Commission has set out, as one of its top priorities, the building of high level skills, allowing African graduates to become effective leaders in many fields of vital importance to Africa's future, including the management of natural resources such as water and energy; science, technology and innovation; the life sciences, including combating disease; space science; and governance. This can be done by generating a stream of well-prepared graduates, with strong quantitative problem-solving skills, who can contribute to each of these areas. In that note I would like to inform you that the African Union-driven Pan-African University is set to open its first Hub soon. On completion, five regional hubs, selected on the basis of their academic, research excellence and focus on Africa's needs, will be opened across Africa. The Pan-African University is a complex undertaking and we expect the ASTII initiative to generate relevant indicators which will assist the functioning of the PAU.

With this note I would like to call upon [see programme/agenda] to give the first opening remarks!