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**African Science, Technology & Innovation Indicators (ASTII) Initiative**

Prof. J. Ezin, Commissioner for  
*Human Resources, Science and Technology*

**[SALUTATION]**

It gives me great pleasure on behalf of the African Union and H.E. the Prof. Ezin the Commissioner for Science, to welcome all of you again to Addis Ababa for this very important workshop to launch the second phase of the African Science, Technology and Innovation Indicators Initiative (ASTII) and publication of the first African Innovation 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.

Since 2007, NEPAD with the support of the AUC-HRST has been implementing this project with the objective of building the capacities of our Member States to play a key role in measuring science and technology in the continent. Today is indeed an auspicious occasion as we are gathered here to witness the launch of the second phase and indeed the publication of the African Innovation Outlook as a tangible output of this project.

### **Excellencies, 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 both technically and financially supporting this project. 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.

An enabling environment for harnessing science for socio-economic development does exist in our continent. You may recall that in January 2009, the AU Assembly of the Heads of State and Government approved the offer by the Government of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea to host and champion the creation of an African Observatory for Science, Technology and Innovation. This offer consists of a financial contribution of US\$3,6 million. 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 Initiative is one of the projects guiding us towards the Observatory and indeed will form its content. A lot has been achieved during this 19 Country Pilot Phase. You may recall that

currently, all R&D and innovation activities in the world are measured broadly according to the same principle. We know that data availability, comparability and quality are still challenging, especially in Africa. To this end, I do agree with the methodologies you have followed by using the framework laid down in the Frascati and Oslo manuals. However, the realities on the ground will very soon show that you need to be innovative on these methodologies in order to tackle problems which are specific to our continent, Africa. And I reiterate the need to develop common instruments!

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

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. This has been confirmed by a quasi-African absence with evidence based position in the current debate on Food Crisis; Energy Shortage, Water Crisis and Climate Change. It is my view that these challenges and gaps in our local knowledge systems will continue to serve as food for thought for the ASTII Agenda.

In 2010 the AU Commission with the support of the European Commission successfully launched the African Union Research Grants Project to promote collaborative research on Africa's science and technology policy. The first ever African Union Open Call for Research Proposals valued at about €7 million will support research in Post-harvest and Agriculture; Renewable and Sustainable Energy; and Water and Sanitation. A second Call of the same magnitude will be published this year. The long term view is for this project to evolve into a durable pan African research programme framework.

The AU Commission has also 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 through the African Union-driven Pan-African University Initiative that will opened its doors across Africa. The ASTII initiative will play a crucial role in generating relevant indicators which will inform these and other initiatives.

The ASTII Initiative is your programme as Member States. The AUC-HRST and NEPAD will ensure the continental coordination and implementation of the programme as well as provision of technical inputs and we will continue to engage the Developing Partners to support this agenda. Launching the second phase shows how important the project is and we should continue to involve the AU relevant policy organs such as the AMCOST and the Summit to ensure that the programme is mainstreamed into the national and regional development agenda. We must have specific decisions binding the Member States to do STI measurements.

With these remarks let me congratulate NEPAD, Member States and our partners for the sterling job done and do hope that the second phase will be even more exciting. I wish you a successful meeting.

**I Thank You.**