

# Concept Note for the Coalition on Science, Technology, and Innovation for Africa's Development

May 2nd, 2023

## Context

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development established the Technology Facilitation Mechanism to support the application of science, technology, and innovation (STI). The aim is to enhance North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on and for access to STI and enhance knowledge sharing on mutually agreed terms, including through improved coordination among existing mechanisms. Several existing efforts such as the STI Roadmaps and capacity building programmes for STI are part of this effort.

The African Union adopted 'Agenda 2063: the Africa We Want' whose aspirations and goals align very well with the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The STI Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA-2024) was also adopted and has four pillars: a) infrastructure development; b) building technical competences, c) promoting innovation and entrepreneurship and d) establishing an enabling environment.

Notwithstanding the ongoing work of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Team on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (UN IATT) (A/RES/76/213), many African countries are likely to miss the targets of the 2030 Agenda without significant upscaling of STI systems to meet existing and emerging challenges. In this regard, African leadership and partnerships with the international community are needed to build a robust research, development, and innovation ecosystem capable of addressing the multiple challenges and realizing the numerous opportunities in Africa to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

As a first step, the UN IATT through UNDESA and UNECA are hosting the first STI in Africa Day with a focus on some of the key levers that can help Africa accelerate its development and meet the goals in a mutually beneficial manner. These include:

1. ***Empowering Africa's youth:*** The largest population of young people on Earth (about 42% of the global youth population by 2030) will be in Africa. Irrespective of one's opinion, this is a key resource that needs to drive growth in Africa and the world. The right support measures to shape the potential of Africa's youth are needed now.
2. ***Enabling the contribution of the African Diaspora:*** About 167 million in North and Latin America and the Caribbean, and 4 million in Europe, among others, are an underutilized resource that can foster development, collaborations, and partnerships for good between Africa and the world to advance STI.
3. ***Leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area:*** The single largest market in the world currently values at \$3.2 trillion with household spending of about \$1.9 trillion with a growing unmet demand, and home to almost all the key resources the world needs to meet its global challenges. While the private sector is taking the lead, the international community can ensure Africa's development is on a sustainable path to avoid costly retrofitting.

4. ***Building diversified value-added industries:*** that are competitive and sustainable by exploiting STI to produce value added services and enhance productivity in manufacturing and agriculture, thus serving as a lever for STI4SDGs. The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the need to ensure STI plays a critical role in building Africa's own vibrant industries.

## **Objectives**

***The Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) for Africa Coalition*** is an endeavor focused on creating a pathway for African states to develop, deploy, and expand its use of STI in the context of the SDGs. Its objective are (I) relying on the potential of African people, especially its youth and diaspora, expand financial and educational opportunities to find workable and scalable STI solutions for the African states; (II) work within the African Continental Free Trade Area with African financial firms, and Africa's growing industrial base to increase investments into research and development and build out its infrastructure to support the STI for the SDGs; (III) develop STI roadmaps at national and sub-national levels and implement related capacity building activities for African states and their stakeholders; (IV) develop and enhance the agenda of STI for Africa in the UN processes and mechanism.

## **Working arrangements and scope**

The Coalition is a multi-stakeholder, informal interest group that Member States wishing to share experiences, resources, and practices in addressing common complex challenges can hatch and nurture new initiatives that can benefit for national and global STI capabilities to accelerate the attainment of the SDGs and the aspirations of their own people. The Coalition will serve as a global go-to-place and platform to identify, refine, and incubate scalable international action and cooperation on STI for the SDGs in Africa.

The Coalition can leverage on ongoing efforts. For instance, the UNECA initiated lithium battery value chain that the Democratic Republic of Congo and Zambia and which has attracted interest from South Africa and may appeal to Zimbabwe and several other mining nations and energy-deficient countries in Africa. Similarly, the call to establish renewable energy centers of excellence and programmes in African universities at the STI Forum 2023 has attracted interest from UNIDO and its Republic of Congo Centre of Excellence in Renewable Energy; UNESCO and UNECA. Such initiatives provide concrete examples for scalable STI solutions that can be supported by the African states, diaspora, youths (especially women), and can benefit from and drive the African Continental Free Trade Area and diversification of African economies. Such efforts could also anchor the STI roadmaps at national and sub-national levels and benefit from capacity building activities of the UN IATT.

## **Co-Leadership, Membership, & Secretariat:**

The Coalition is led by South Africa, Morocco, Ethiopia, and Ghana with the support of UNDESA and UNECA.

**Members:** The co-leads will issue a call for expression of interest in joining the Coalition to all African States through their national authorities/representatives. Interested countries will be requested to submit an expression of interest in a written format to engage in collaboration with other members and partners.

**Friend of Coalition:** The co-leads will also issue a call for expression of interest in supporting the Coalition to become “Friend of Coalition”. Among the Friend of Coalition, a sub-group of “Strategic Partners” can be established, depending on the commitments and support. The initial Strategic Partners includes African Union and the Global Solutions Summit.

**How to Support:**

Supporters of the Coalition can assist this initiative in any of the 3 following ways: (i) Lending their “voice of support” to the messages formulated by the Coalition; (ii) By supporting the implementation of the selected STI initiatives for SDGs as part of the STI4SDGs Roadmaps for Africa; (iii) By contributing to the sustained operation of the Coalition.

**To facilitate the work, contacts:**

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