The Place of the Civil Society in using Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) to achieve sustainable and resilient COVID-19 recovery, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): imperative of paradigm shifts to leave no one behind; 03 May 2021

- a summary of the symposium workshop side event organized at 6th United Nations multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for Sustainable Development Goals; by:

1. Afrihealth Optonet Association [CSOs Network]
2. Society for Conservation and Sustainability of Energy and Environment in Nigeria (SOCSEEN)
3. Dr Uzo Adirieje Foundation (DUZAFOUND)

I. Introduction

The Civil Society is in a crucial position in using Science, Technology and Innovation to achieve sustainable and resilient COVID-19 recovery and the SDGs and in achieving the global/UN commitment to leave no one behind. Afrihealth Optonet Association, Society for Conservation and Sustainability of Energy and Environment in Nigeria and Dr Uzo Adirieje Foundation; and with approval from the UN STI Forum secretariat, organized a symposium workshop side event. The symposium workshop aimed to recognize and engage the civil society organizations [CSOs] and communities as critical partners in creating demand and accountability for STI research and knowledge generation, depository, dissemination and monitoring and evaluation (M&E); at all levels of society and governance in order to 'build back better' and achieve the Agenda 2030 SDGs during and beyond COVID-19, towards achieving Agenda 2063.

II. Objectives of the workshop

The symposium workshop side event, held on 3 May 2021 with the following objectives:

1.   Promote the inclusion of the Civil Society in the conceptualization, planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) to achieve sustainable and resilient COVID-19 recovery, and the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2063;

2.   Sensitize the global civil society and communities at all levels to use community-focused activities to mobilize the critical support the governments and stakeholders need in using Science, Technology and Innovation to achieve sustainable and resilient COVID-19 recovery and the SDGs;

3.   Emphasize the monitoring and demand-creation roles of the civil society in using Science, Technology and Innovation to achieve sustainable and resilient COVID-19 recovery and the SDGs;

4.   Advocate and emphasize the integration of the civil society as a key player in promoting and achieving knowledge-based economies/societies through STI especially in Africa and global South countries in a seamless manner to avoid unnecessary duplications; and

5.   Promote effective partnership between the Civil Society and other sectors (government, businesses/private for-profit sector, media, etc.) in order to achieve knowledge-based economies/societies anchored on STI at all levels and in all countries/communities.

III. Registrations and Attendance

Two Hundred and Thirty-nine (239) civil society organizations and STI stakeholders from all over the world registered for the event. Participants included persons from Nigeria, Jamaica, Cambodia, Austria, Ghana, Ireland, Cameroun, South Africa, Morrocco, Switzerland, Uganda, United States, Egypt and Democratic Republic of the Congo. These included women, children and young people; indigenous peoples; non-governmental organizations; local authorities; workers and trade unions; business and industry; the scientific and technological community; farmers; local communities, volunteer groups and foundations, migrants and their families, older persons, persons with disabilities, and various professional.

IV. Speakers and Presentations

Dr. Uzodinma Adirieje, CEO of Afrihealth Optonet Association, who is also the National Chairman, Civil Society Organizations Strategy Group on SDGs in Nigeria, facilitated the side event/symposium. He provided the context in which the side event was holding and recalled the crucial roles being played by the civil society in ensuring the achievement sustainable and resilient COVID-19 recovery, and the Sustainable Development Goals; as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the civil society sector. Presentations were made by the key speakers and dispassionately discussed by the participants. The key speakers were:

Mag. Klaus Höckner (France**);** Ambassador of the ZeroProject; Member of the IAAP Global Leadership Council; and W3C Advisory Committee Representative; who spoke on the subtopic: *Zero Project - share your ideas, product and service - we do not have to reinvent the wheel*'.

Dr. Ann Marcus-Quinn (Ireland)**;** Course Director for the MA in Technical Communication and E-Learning, University of Limerick, Ireland; who spoke on the subtopic: *Supporting Open Education Practices in a Post Covid World*'.

Dr. Tríona Hourigan (Ireland)**;** Post-primary teacher at Laurel Hill Secondary School FCJ, Limerick, Ireland; who spoke on the subtopic: '*Teaching through a Pandemic - Lessons Learned*'.

Surv. Dr. Emmanuel Kwamina Bamfo–Agyei (Ghana); MGhIS, Senior Lecturer, Head of Department & Vice Dean, Dept of Building Technology, School of Engineering, Cape Coast Technical University, Ghana; who spoke on the subtopic: '*Relevance of 4IR in Science, Technology and Innovation*'.

V. Recommendations from the side event

1. There is an urgent need to promote and support inclusive development through the capacitation and integration of knowledge-based economies among the civil society and communities into the political space to ensure that political entities and intending office holders key into the Initiative as a matter of utmost priority and in a seamless manner to avoid unnecessary duplications;

2. The United Nations/STI Forum is requested to develop and implement a Global Strategy to Mobilize Resources for Civil Society Knowledge Capacity and Institutional Development in post COVID-19 world especially in the global south/developing countries;

3. The African Union and G77 countries are requested to urgently adapt policies and procedures to key into the rapid changes of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR), develop physical and digital infrastructure and leverage it to accelerate participation of the civil society and rural, poor and suburban communities in global value chains and efforts to contain the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond;

4. In line with current dispositions, governments are requested to provide and support Open Education for understanding and harnessing the impact of technology in education on student progression and learning outcomes, and invest in education and reskilling programs for the civil society and workers, to ensure that technology supplements, instead of replaces, labour;

5. Since innovation is at the heart of the 4IR and knowledge-based economies, efforts must continue towards reinforcing state and institutional capacity and commitments to drive and support innovation and create the enabling business environments essential for success using School Digital Culture, Use of Television, School Communities, regular Stakeholder Consultation, and reducing inequality in terms of access to technology and devices; and

6. Continuously identify and promote Innovative Practices and Innovative Policies covering in the areas of accessibility, education, employment, independent living and political participation.

Participants expressed gratitude to the UN STI Forum and Afrihealth Optonet Association for organizing the symposium workshop side event.

Signed:
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