

**Intervention of Prof. Samia Charfi Kaddour, DG of Scientific Research,  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Tunisia**

Since the independence of Tunisia, in 1956, the government has adopted strategic priorities mainly education, health and gender. The priority was to give access to education for boys and girls from all the regions. Besides, Tunisia has a unique position regarding the women rights in Africa and Arab countries.

Thanks to these strategic orientations, in our universities, 66 % of students and 56% of researchers are women. According to 2020 global innovation index of WIPO, Tunisia is the second country in the world in term of number of graduates in science and engineering per capita, Tunisia has the first position in Africa and Arab countries and the thirteen position in the world for the number of publications in science and technology per GDP. The good performance in scientific research gives the opportunity for Tunisia to be the first country in Africa and Arab world to be associated to European R&I framework programmes since H2020. Otherwise, Tunisia committed in several and diversified international R&I partnerships dealing with water, food security, blue economy, biodiversity and environment.

Tunisia strongly supports (STI) as key elements for the attainment of SDGs. MESRS have defined 6 priorities and challenges for R&I which are aligned to SDG's. This choice is in line with the recent ranking of Tunisia as the second African country in achieving SDG's.

In this dynamic, Tunisia applied to join the UN Global Pilot Programme for the development of STI for SDGs roadmaps launched in the framework of the UN/Inter-Agency Task Team (UN/IATT) and would like to reiterate its interest and commitment to engage in the process.

Tunisia opted for the development of the STI for SDGs Roadmaps based on the Smart Specialisation methodology and in line with the Guidebook elaborated by the UN/IATT and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission (JRC) which I would like to warmly thank for their support.

As you know, Smart Specialisation is recognised as one of the leading methodologies for the development of STI for SDGs roadmaps, it will allow us to identify place-based STI priorities aligned with key SDGs which will be the base for the development of a coherent national strategy.