

Background Note 9 for

UN Workshop on Building Capacity and Scaling up STI Actions and adoption of Countries' STI4SDGs Roadmaps in Africa

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Key Recommendations for Actions to Support the STI4SDGs Roadmap Implementation

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The *Coalition on Science, Technology, and Innovation for Africa's Development* should support Origin Research and Innovations Labs to develop, implement, and scale a programme for the **mobility of youth in Africa and the Diaspora to co-work in co-creation, co-innovation, co-design of solutions to Africa's most pressing problems and co-invention of Africa's future.**

The “main mission of Origin is to bring the best talent in Africa to solve complex and intriguing problems through ground-breaking research, development and innovation”. Origin Research and Innovations Labs is a concept of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and its partners. The roadmap to actualize this concept has been tested and demonstrated through challenges and innovation calls made in 2021 and the associated boot camp that followed. In 2022, Kenya nominated the host for the first Origin physical hub: the Origin Research and Innovations Labs Physical Hub of East Africa, of which the development is well underway. (The concept proposed the establishment of another four regional hubs to be located in South Africa, Central Africa, West Africa, and North Africa). Following the formal launch of Origin Research and Innovation Labs in Niamey, Niger, in February 2023 and subsequent presentation to potential partners in the events preceding the First STI in Africa Day in May 2023 in New York, Origin can now be considered to have entered the full implementation stage.

Origin Research and Innovations Labs is concerned with the practical aspects of making the STI work translate into solutions to Africa's problems. Indeed, Origin is a vehicle for accelerating the attainment of the SDG goals across the continent. For this reason, Origin is a great platform for the *Coalition on Science, Technology, and Innovation for Africa's Development* (the Coalition) to implement and develop the Coalition's proposed objectives. The Origin's concept has been unpacked into three core work areas: 1. Problem solving; 2. Co-creation and co-innovation; 3. Co-inventing the future.

One way Origin plans to actualize co-creation, co-innovation and co-inventing the future is to run a programme for talented youth to come together and work on Africa's vexing problems. Such a programme will allow the youth to meet and co-work virtually first and later in person in the hubs or partner institutions that Origin will bring on board, viz., universities, innovation hubs, research institutions, and private and public sector players. The in-person group activities will last for a couple of weeks, say 4 to 12 weeks, enabling the youth to gain context of the problems, benefit from each other's different perspectives and background experiences, enhance cross-fertilization and ultimately generate better ideas. The programme will strengthen bonds among the youths, across borders and to the Diaspora. The youths will continue co-working on solutions upon return to their home. The programme will sow the seed that will develop in the future into major collaborations and business partnerships across the continent and the Diaspora.

In line with her mission and institutional design, Origin will identify the challenges and implement the solutions to those challenges. The proposed youth mobility is different from a traditional university student and staff exchange programme, focusing on students earning academic credits that they take back to their home institution. This youth mobility programme will focus on problem-solving and promote the development of scalable start-up ideas.

The target group is the young people in Africa, including those in the Diaspora.

The programme will support individual youth in Africa to travel to a country other than their home country to participate in co-creation and co-innovation. Hence, it will promote Intra-Africa Youth Mobility. Furthermore, it will facilitate the Diaspora youth to co-work with the youth in Africa to solve Africa's most pressing problems. Hence, it will support the youth's travel, visa acquisition, and subsistence in Africa. In most cases, the Diaspora youth in the West will afford the costs of participating in the programme. However, many talented youths in most parts of Africa cannot afford the cost of visa, travel and subsistence to participate in the programme. The participation of such youths will shine a light on challenges in the regions that lag in developing STI infrastructure and attaining SDGs. They will make the programme more inclusive. Such youths have the potential to catalyse the transformation of their country upon going back home.

During the First STI in Africa events in New York, Origin showcased the Semiconductor Technologies Limited (STL), the first of its kind semiconductors research and development laboratories to be established in Africa, to demonstrate how Africans in the Diaspora in the high-tech industry can establish enterprises that can leapfrog Africa into the mainstream of global high-tech supply chains. Building on this showcase, Origin seeks to establish a fellowship programme to support the Diaspora youth who have such great ideas and exposure to high-tech industries, to come to Africa and implement the ideas.

The proposed programme requires elaborate administrative structures, networks, resources, and, above everything else, talented youths and mentors.

It is estimated that around 60% of Africa's population, estimated at 1,466,463,016, is currently younger than 25 years and that between now and the end of the century, Africa's youth (15-34 years) is expected to grow by +168%. By 2020, Africa had 400 million young people aged between the ages of 15 to 35 years. In addition, it is estimated that 3.0% of the African population lived outside their home country in 2020. Consequently, for the proposed programme to significantly impact SDG attainment, we should rapidly expand it with regard to the number of participating youths and countries, the number of partners brought on board, scalable start-ups and the number of resources available to support it.

Recommendations for Actions by the Coalition

- (i) Given that it is composed of Ambassadors to the UN in New York, the coalition can reach out to leading African personalities, including the Diaspora, to serve as champions and be identified with the proposed STI4SDGs programme.
- (ii) With the support of the champions identified above, the coalition can contribute to the scaling of the programme by organizing significant resource mobilization events in the US and elsewhere. Such events can provide significant seed funds to put the programme, and other related STI4SDGs activities, on a high growth trajectory.

- (iii) The ambassadors can identify institutions that will be the source of the talented youths for the programme and then organize events for Origin and her associates to develop appropriate partnership frameworks.