**Workshop on building capacity and scaling up STI actions and adoption of countries' STI4SDGs Roadmaps in Africa**

Oct. 12-13, 2023

**Roundtable 8: Closing and the way forward - regional networks and other mechanisms for promoting multi-stakeholder approach with localized STI4SDGs and bottom-up community inputs**

**Co-organizers: ECA and DESA**

*Friday, Oct. 13th, 15:45-17:00pm, CR6 UN ECA Conference Room, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*

## 1. Background

The *Coalition on Science, Technology, and Innovation for Africa's Development (Coalition)* was launched on 2 May 2023 in New York during the first STI in Africa Day that was held on the margin of the 8th Science Technology and Innovation Forum. The first STI in Africa Day focussed on: ***a) Empowering Africa's youth; b) Enabling the contribution of the African Diaspora; c) Leveraging the African Continental Free Trade Area (ACFTA); and d) Building diversified supply and value chains for industrial development.***

*The Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) for Africa Coalition* is an endeavour focused on creating pathways for African countries to develop, deploy, and expand the use of STI in the context of the SDGs. The objectives of the Coalition include:

A. Mobilize and leverage the African Diaspora and their partners to identify scalable STI solutions and investment opportunities for Africa's scientific and industrial development;
B. Identify opportunities to empower African youths to enable them to become drivers of sustainable development;
C. Create awareness of the immense opportunities that the ACFTA presents for investment in science and technology and the development of new and diversified competitive and efficient value and supply chains;

D. Mobilize resources and support from partners to support capacity building for STI policies, strategies, and infrastructure in Africa, such as the STI Roadmaps for the SDGs;
E. Develop and enhance the agenda of STI for Africa in UN processes and mechanisms located at its headquarters in New York City.

In this regard, the Coalition is a multi-stakeholder, informal interest group that UN Member States wishing to share experiences, resources, and practices in addressing common complex challenges can utilize to nurture new initiatives to accelerate the attainment of the SDGs and the aspirations of their 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.

## 2. The Focus of the roundtable

Composed of Ambassadors to the UN in New York, the Coalition is well placed to mobilize global support and knowledge to meet many of Africa's challenges that the rest of the world may have already solved; serve as gatekeepers who ensure Africa's STI development concerns are taken into consideration at the global level; serve as a bridge between Africa and the rest of the world, especially its Diaspora; and keep Africa informed of new and emerging issues likely to impact STI development in Africa. To meet these goals, the Coalition may consider the following initiatives:

I. **Mapping Diaspora networks, associations and other similar formal bodies** working in STI and STI-related fields. There are several networks or organised groups of Diaspora that could, among others, a) provide the Coalition with access to a large pool of experts in the Diaspora; b) offer useful lessons on how to link the Diaspora to the continent to suggest what works and what may not work; c) leverage existing resources (e.g. human, financial, services, technologies, fellowships etc) that may exist in the networks; and d) help further identify and extend potential partners for the Coalition.

II. **Mega R&D and Technology Initiatives Database:** This database will contain existing, new, and upcoming as well as proposed mega R&D undertakings in Africa that are likely to attract the interest of partners in and outside Africa. Mega projects tend to be long-term and will build both the basic and applied research experimental development skills and investment and management know-how that they demand.

III. **Community-technology needs reference**: While most technology looks for problems to fix, we suggest a community technology (solutions) needs reference portal. Communities, including leaders, partners, and groups, could send their needs (e.g., clean and safe water, disease surveillance, energy, etc.). Communities may range from 'small or specialized communities' to large ones, such as cities and countries with urgent needs that require solutions and are willing to implement

them. These needs can be featured and could attract the interest of philanthropists, entrepreneurs, innovators, inventors, and scientists and can even inform the work of governments, international partners, and civil societies.

IV. **A youth platform:** Africa is a young continent, but most of its leaders are relatively old and predominantly male. Enabling the youth to work with each other and share their expectations with the experienced across the continent and beyond could help bring their concerns to the political and business leaders and unlock their full potential. The Coalition could bring existing youth groups such as YALDA to engage, support, moderate, and grow the platform.

V. **Convening Afric-wide events:** The Coalition is well placed to convene African events and initiatives that could bring together the teams in Africa, the African Diaspora, and partners. Such initiatives could include annual Africa Tech Week, Exhibitions, Roundtables, Showcasing, Investment Promotion, and so forth that could be convened in New York or member States in Africa. Well managed, the different groups involved in some of the activities above may come up with their contributions and plans.

VI. **Supporting an informal secretariat:** ECA and DESA currently serve as an informal secretariat of the Coalition. The Coalition and its partners may provide funding, interns, fellows, and staff that can work with the current team at ECA and DESA to undertake the work and support. Over time, the Secretariat should evolve to become more independent and, thus, give the Coalition freedom to operate.

**3. Key questions for the roundtable:**

a) What measures, arrangements, and strategies should the Coalition consider to maintain stronger and action-oriented links with existing bodies of the Diaspora? What common practices and approaches do the existing Diaspora communities use to engage in STI-related work in Africa? How can these practices and approaches be enhanced and/or leveraged?

b) What criteria should be used to identify mega-R&D and technology projects in Africa, considering the wide differences in sizes of African economies and the concentrations of R&D and technology hubs in a few African countries? What mechanisms need to be put in place to identify and support these projects?

c) What steps should the Coalition take to ensure that local communities in Africa, particularly those that may be excluded, unconnected to modern digital platforms, and disadvantaged in many ways, are enabled to request technology solutions and showcase grassroots innovations that could be applied at large scale to meet the SDGs and advance wellbeing? This is important, considering more people in Africa live in rural areas.

d) The sustainability of the Coalition will largely depend on the key activities that showcase its impact and on support from its members and partners. What are some of the

activities and initiatives the Coalition should undertake in the short term to raise awareness and its profile, attract partners, and achieve impact within its resources?

## 4. Guide to moderators and speakers
### a) Moderator:

The moderator is not a 'speaker' and thus should introduce the topic in two minutes and the speakers and discussants briefly – their names and affiliations - for about 20 seconds (*avoid* reading the CV/Bio or celebrate their achievements). You have *the role of timekeeper* and should politely cut off speakers that take more time than allocated. More importantly, you should stay objective but impartial to ensure all views are heard and keep a healthy and constructive conversation to achieve the intended goal of the session.

### b) Speakers

Each speaker will be allocated a maximum of 5 minutes to make introductory remarks to provide inputs and answers to the session's questions. Since it is a conversation, PPT presentations are strongly discouraged. To the extent possible, spend 1 minute introducing yourself and the institution and its work, 3-4 minutes answering questions being discussed. Overall, keep the discussion simple and less technical, and identify or recommend a few (up to three) actions that the academia, civil society, the UN, and public and private sectors can undertake to address the issues under consideration.

### c) Discussants

You have about 3 minutes to make quick comments, additions, and suggestions that inform the discussion. You may also pose new questions needing additional information, research, or policy discussions. Pinpoint and deal with preferably one issue for which you feel strongly could make a difference or has been left out in the discussion.