

## **Session on: Science, Technology and Innovation Policies for Africa's Structural Transformation and Development – Lead by STIPRO**

### **1. Snapshot of issues presented and discussed**

Africa is one of the poorest regions of the world – actually sitting at the very bottom when it comes to development indicators: more than 2/3 of the least developed countries (LDCs) are in Africa. In addition, the continent has one of the youngest populations –it is said about 70% of African population is under 30, and this is expected to double by 2050. The major problem here is that most of these young people do not have decent employment, making strategies for employment generation one of the top African agenda. As rightly indicated in Agenda 2063, this can happen only through structural transformation – focusing on adding value to the continent's abundant natural resources. This presentation focuses on the crucial role of science, technology and innovation (STI) capabilities in the process. Citing the examples of more developed countries, the presentation argues that, no economic or social policy, can fish Africa out of her current predicament, unless these are accompanied by STI policies. The case of South Korea was used to demonstrate the importance of evidence based and good policies in industrialization. Korea closely coordinated her industrial policies with the STI policies, and through this, climbed the innovation capability ladder from focusing on technology imports while building her national innovation systems to the current state of dominance of high tech, R&D intensive sectors such as the biotechnology and microelectronics.

But looking at Africa; despite many of the countries having put in place STI policies (for some for almost 40 years now) the policies have dismal impact on development. The presentation mentioned lack of policy coordination and implementation as the major problem: many of the African STI policies, including the regional, such as the STISA-2024, are not adequately implemented, neither coordinated with other important and related policies such as the Agenda 2063. The fact that many of the policies are still based on the linear model – emphasizing expenditure on science and technology generation, with very little focus on the users of the generated knowledge – leading to lack of real impact on development, was also discussed extensively.

### **2. Conclusions**

Many of the participants agreed on the existence of such challenges, and dwelled on where the challenges could possibly be coming from, including policies being not well known by important policy stakeholders, and that may be the governments did not mean to implement the policies in the first place, the argument that was supported by mentioning the fact that many of these policies are not accompanied by appropriate budgets. The explanations given for emphasis on the linear model include the fact that, the model is easier to implement, easy to communicate compared to the complex systemic nature of innovation. Others argued that donors have been in the forefront in the promotion of the model, as they prefer supporting the supply side of innovation.

### **3. Proposals**

Following were proposed on how to best address the challenges:

- ❖ Many of the stated causes and reasons are at best hypothesis, and therefore there is a need for in-depth research on why African STI policies are not implemented neither coordinated with sectoral policies.
- ❖ Africa should use her local resources to fund research to generate evidence for her STI policies, especially for those challenges that are local in nature, e.g. the issue of adding value to her natural resources.
- ❖ Along with the emphasize on generation of concrete evidence through research, it was proposed that the continent should hold regular forums to discuss these issues, especially the following: a close follow up on how much resources for policy research are coming from the region; what is happening in the area of evidence generation (the issue of education and expertise in this kind of research was emphasized); and what is happening in the areas of STI policy design and implementation – both at the countries and regional levels.