

AFRICAN UNION



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**Virtual Meeting for the
Ministers in charge of Science, Technology and Innovation
18 August 2020, 14:00 – 17:00 (GMT +3)
Connection Details:**

Exchange, and sharing experiences and best practices on
National Science, Technology and Innovation
In response to COVID-19 Pandemic

CONCEPT NOTE

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The 3rd African Union Specialized Technical Committee On Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST 3), agreed in its virtual meeting of 30th April 2020, to convene non-binding informal Webinars periodically as a platform for enabling Member States to exchange information, share experiences and best practices on their national science, technology and innovation COVID-19 Response. The Ministers also recommended the establishment of R&D platforms at national, regional and continental levels for:
 - Sharing best practices, information, mutual learning, and up-scaling initiative with a regional dimension, and minimising duplication of efforts on COVID-19;
 - Conducting and documenting scientific priority setting including R&D activities, identifying gaps and promoting networking, coordination and intra-Africa collaboration on COVID-19 R&D and future outbreaks ;
 - Establishing, strengthening and supporting networks of biosafety and bio-security laboratories in the continent, and Promoting human and institutional capacity building;
 - Evaluating and promoting treatment protocols and other experiences by African researchers in line with the demographic and climatic realities of the continent; and

2. This is a strong testimony that a lot is happening at the national, regional and continental levels as the entire continent intensifies efforts to provide science, technology and innovation response to COVID-19 and to create in the long run social stability, resilience and security against pandemics.

3. The role of the research and innovation cannot be over emphasised, and there is an urgent need to empower the African scientific and research community to lead efforts to contextualize global relevant scientific agendas to provide solutions for (a) diagnosis, (b) therapies, (c) vaccines, and (d) forecasting. For a collective and effective research and innovation response, we should ensure a functional system of science, technology and innovation on the continent that is built on strong transnational collaborative platforms that utilize our diversity, range of existing capacities, and expertise, while leveraging strong international partnerships, including with the World Health Organisation (WHO). We need to go further and unlock the potential of local medicinal plants and traditional knowledge in order to provide a mix of responses to deal with pandemics, and in particular combatting the current COVID-19. About 75 and 80 % of Africans use plants and traditional medicine for their medical needs.

4. Intra-Africa collaboration is essential and key, if Africa is to win this race against COVID-19. Currently, a lot of work is going on in different Member States continent-wide but with minimal collaboration among our research communities, laboratories and regional economic communities. We should bring onboard the private sector and boost innovation in particular for the production of Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) and Medical Supplies.
5. Several candidate vaccines for Covid-19 are currently in the pipeline mostly in advanced countries with a lot of means (politic, human, financial and infrastructure) committed. Due to the risk of potential monopoly of the owner countries on the most efficient vaccines, how the AU member States are participating to these STI efforts and the related strategies of Member States need to be shared.
6. Following the adoption of the AU Agenda 2063, the Commission ensured that this framework is underpinned by science, technology and innovation to foster building a sustainable integrated R&D and Innovation Ecosystem that is crucial for unlocking potential solutions that address the continent's development and emerging challenges through the implementation of STISA-2024.
7. The Commission is therefore organising the first of a series of informal webinars for the Ministers in charge of science, technology and innovation to exchange information, share experiences and best practices. Member States will present their national science, technology and innovation response programmes to COVID-19.

II. OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOMES

8. The meeting will enable the Member States to take stock of various science, technology and innovation response activities as presented by each country and explore ways to enhance intra-Africa research and innovation collaboration, and how to up-scale initiatives and programmes that have a regional dimension to benefit the entire continent. The meeting will also provide a brief on the implementation of the major recommendations made by the ministers during the last session of the STC-EST3.
9. The outcome of this meeting will enable countries to break the silos and barriers in R&D across the continent and ensure that resources reach a threshold and are used efficiently. It is expected that results will be achieved rapidly, and the national contribution of Member States in the fight against the COVID 19 pandemic will be well documented for upscaling and more visibility at global level.

III. PROVISIONAL AGENDA

- Opening session
- Country Presentations on National Science, Technology and Innovation Response to COVID-19 (Member States (5mins))
- Development of a vaccine against COVID-19 in Africa and Africa's contribution to ongoing global vaccine research efforts
- Harnessing African Traditional Medicines to combat COVOD-19
- Closing session

IV. LOGISTICS ARRANGEMENT

10. The Commission will share the meeting link as soon as it is set-up for the participants and members of the bureau to connect. Furthermore, the Commission will send out invitation to all participants with all details for the meeting.

V. SECRETARIAT

11. Department of Human Resources Science and Technology

African Union Commission

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