

## **UN S&T Cluster for Support of NEPAD 2005 Update**

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### **Background**

The objectives of the UN S&T Cluster are:

Promote coherence and coordination in the UN system's support for NEPAD's Plan of Action on science and technology; Promote joint programming, harmonization and cooperation in African science and technology activities within the UN system; Promote dynamic and action oriented approaches for the support of NEPAD S&T activities; Promote interaction and collaboration with NEPAD, AU, Regional Economic Communities, academies, knowledge networks, scientific communities and other stakeholders working on science, technology and innovation for sustainable development in Africa.

Aside from backstopping the NEPAD S&T Action Plan, the cluster identified lead thematic areas for specific focus, namely: engineering education, entrepreneurship in higher education, the African Green Revolution, biotechnology, Centers of Excellence and the Brain Drain. For more details please see [http://www.uneca.org/unregionalconsultations/science\\_and\\_technology/index.asp](http://www.uneca.org/unregionalconsultations/science_and_technology/index.asp)

### **Update/Activities**

1. Tracking/Monitoring the NEPAD S&T Plan of Action. After its 2003 initiation in which UNECA and UNESCO participated, 2005 saw the update and elaboration of Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action, 2006-2010, launched by the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST) at its 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting, 29-30 September 2005, Dakar, Senegal. The Consolidated Plan moves the strategic planning process forward towards implementation of the NEPAD S&T activities.

2. In particular, the Plan details the flagship programs to be implemented, and the institutional arrangements to be used. It spells out the roles, relationships and mechanisms between NEPAD, AU, implementing institutions and partners in achieving its objectives. While the AU provides the overall political leadership, policy direction and guidance, harmonization and advocacy, NEPAD takes a more technical and operational role in rolling out the Plan. Both do advocacy and mobilize resources together. An innovative feature of the Plan is that its final activities on the ground will be implemented by African Centres of Excellence identified, accredited and highlighted by NEPAD. Once flagged in this way, the implementing institutions then attract the resources to be mobilized by the AU, NEPAD and all the partners. Several centers of excellence/ implementation institutions have already taken off, e.g. the Biosciences Facility (biotechnology); African Institute of Mathematical Sciences (AIMS), and the African Laser Center. This model appears promising for possible emulation by other Clusters.

3. Science, Technology and Innovation Systems. UNECA participated in review/restructuring/update of the STI systems and policies of Rwanda, South Africa and Ghana. In Rwanda a meeting to develop a new S&T policy was held (5-6 May 2005); in South Africa it was a Conference on Knowledge Production (23-24 June 2005); and in Ghana it was a data gathering mission (3-7 October 2005) for a series of Lectures by the UNECA Executive Secretary. UNECA, UNCTAD,

NEPAD and others participated in the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on S&T for Development, Geneva, 23-27 May 2005. Two Centers of Excellence were visited – a research/teaching laboratory on tissue culture biotech at University of Ghana, and a commercial tissue culture biotech laboratory at Bomarts Farms, Accra, an indigenous pineapple exporter. Both have been designed by a Ghanaian scientist, Dr Elizabeth Acheampong.

4. Intellectual Property Rights. WIPO supported, and UNECA participated in, the National Conference on the role of invention and innovation in the national economic development of Ethiopia, organized by the Ethiopian Intellectual Property Office and the Ethiopian Inventors Association, Addis Ababa, 9-11 February 2005. An African center of excellence, Dan Technologies, was visited. Pioneered and led by an African industrialist, Eng. Daniel Mebrahtu, it designs and manufactures most of the elevators and traffic lights of Ethiopia.

5. Engineering Education: UNECA participated in the UNESCO ANSTI 1<sup>st</sup> Regional Conference of Vice Chancellors, Provosts and Deans of Science, Engineering and Technology, Accra, Ghana, 15-17 November 2005, and the UNESCO ANSTI Governing Council, Accra/Kumasi, Ghana, 18-21 November 2005. This forum, to be continued biennially, and the ANSTI governing council are key instruments for the management of S&T in Africa with big potential to make a contribution to the development of S&T in Africa. Strong contacts were made with scientific communities and with an official of the AU Science and Technology Regional Centre (STRC) in Lagos, Nigeria.

6. As part of the project on capacity building for sustainable consumption and production in Africa, UNEP organized a one week intensive training for university faculty members and training institutions in the region on Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) methods and tools. The training was given from 28 August to 02 September 2005 and was attended by a total of 32 participants from 22 African countries. The training was developed and conducted in partnership with the International Life Cycle Initiative with an Input from Harvard School of Public Health in the U.S. and the Royal Melbourne Institute of technology (RMIT) in Australia. At the end of the workshop the participants established the African Network on Life Cycle Assessment (ALCANET) with a purpose of facilitating knowledge sharing amongst the LCA community in the region.

7. A Regional Workshop on Environmental Knowledge Sharing in Africa was held from 4-5 October 2005 at the Kumasi University of Science and Technology in Kumassi, Ghana. The Workshop was organized by the United Nations University in collaboration with the Global Virtual University in Norway and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The Workshop deliberated on the potential contribution of e-learning in facilitating environmental knowledge sharing and came up with proposals which include the establishment of an open platform that would facilitate exchange of existing experiences and course materials.

8. African Green Revolution. UNECA continued to promote and monitor the African Green Revolution. The African Green Revolution received the highest UN Mandate when it was endorsed by the UN Summit of September 2005 (par. 68g). A report “Africa’s Green Revolution : A Call to Action” was published by the MDG Technical Support Centre. Mr Abdoulie Janneh, then UN Assistant Secretary General and Director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa and now Executive Secretary of UNECA, played a pivotal role in the Report. He led the Way Forward section which commits stakeholders to develop a 10-year Plan of Action to implement the African Green Revolution in the

decade 2005-2015 as also called for by the UN Summit. UNECA has a draft Plan of Action for consideration.

9. A UNECA proposal to the UN Development Account on “African Green Revolution Network: Sustainable Modernization of Agriculture and Rural Transformation (SMART)” was approved, to be implemented in 2006-2008. UNECA hosted a visit of the Chief Scientific Advisory of UK DFID, centering on possible collaboration in science, technology and the African Green Revolution. The UNECA Executive Secretary was invited to join a Group of Eminent Persons on the African Green Revolution by H.E. President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, current Chair of the African Union and Chair, NEPAD HSGIC. UNECA made invited keynote presentations on the African Green Revolution at the meeting of the Advisory Committee on S&T of the EU-ACP Centre for Technical Cooperation (CTA), Wageningen, 7-11 November 2005, and at the 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of the African Crop Science Society, Entebbe, Uganda, 5-9 December 2005. The scientific communities and S&T leaders participating, including from CGIAR and NEPAD, appreciated the promotional role UNECA is playing in the African Green Revolution.

10. Biotechnology: UNECA, UNIDO, WHO, UNCTAD and UNDP continued to consolidate the Inter-agency Network on Biotechnology, and UN Biotech Africa. A training workshop on biosafety and IPR was completed in Dakar.

11. Brain Drain: UNECA and UNESCO participated in the UNDP–SUSSC/SIG/AAS process to create the Global Science Corps (Africa component).

### **Constraints/Recommendations**

1. Not all members of the UN S&T Cluster have fully internalized the meaning of coordination as yet. At the minimum, there should be more electronic information exchange about Cluster activities as agreed in our Launch Document. UNECA will try to lead the way.
2. The upper level program management <Regional Consultations? Section 11?> could help enhance coordination by sponsoring one physical cluster-level consultation meeting during the year (say mid-term between regional consultations), and/or electronically by reminding clusters to help update their web pages at least twice a year. The website is stale and the e-discussion group never took off.
3. On the NEPAD side, UN Cluster leaders, focal points or other members should be facilitated to attend high level NEPAD meetings (in S&T case, steering committee and/or ministerial council) as appropriate. The presence and technical inputs of UNECA and UNESCO at the 2003 NEPAD meetings (Nairobi, Johannesburg) were highly appreciated by several member states. Observer status and/or more seamless formal arrangements to be negotiated and established between UN and AU/NEPAD.

Thank you  
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