

Dear Colleague

**Request for your view on the design of ASIF**

At its second conference in September 2005 the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST) decided that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) should explore the options for creating an African Science and Innovation Facility (ASIF) to mobilize the continent's and international technical and financial resources for the implementation of Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action (CPA).

The Office of Science and Technology (OST) of NEPAD has commissioned a consultation to seek views about the proposed ASIF, its mission, functions and governance.

If you are interested in participating in this consultation we would be grateful if you would send your responses to the following questionnaire by email to [asif@nepadst.org](mailto:asif@nepadst.org), following the numbering system. We would also be grateful if you would indicate in which country you currently reside and the sector in which you work. For example, government, university, business, NGO, aid agency, other (please identify).

Thank you for your collaboration.

Yours faithfully,

The ASIF Project Team

**Establishing an African Science and Innovation Facility  
of the African Union (AU) and the  
New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)**

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Background**

At its first meeting in November 2003, the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST) resolved to find ways and means of strengthening, individually and collectively, science, technology and innovation systems in Africa and to use innovation as means of attaining sustainable development and integration into the global economy. Subsequently, at its second meeting in 2005, AMCOST adopted the Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action (hereafter CPA) which articulates Africa's common objectives and commitment to harness and apply science and technology to sustainable development. The CPA has clusters of programmes for research and development (R&D) and for improving science and innovation policies in Africa. It proposes the establishment of an African Science and Innovation Facility (ASIF) as a pan-African mechanism for mobilizing and directing Africa's and international resources to the implementation of the CPA.

The NEPAD Office of Science and Technology (NEPAD OST) has commissioned a small team of international experts to review other regions' experiences, consult widely with stakeholders, and to develop and propose specific options for the mission, objectives, organizational configuration and governance of the proposed ASIF. The following set of questions is accordingly aimed at eliciting information on your views and ideas about the proposed ASIF. A report based on this consultation is expected by NEPAD OST in September 2006 and therefore the time required for this consultation is brief. We would therefore much appreciate your responses by the deadline on the 31 August 2006. Your responses are expected to be your personal views and not a representation of any institution or affiliation.

**Questions**

1. **The case for establishing ASIF:**
  - (a) In your opinion, is the idea of establishing a new institutional arrangement (ASIF) the best way to mobilize technical and financial resources needed to implement regional and continental science, technology and innovation programmes of the CPA?
  
  - (b) There may be existing organizations that could also fulfil this role. If you think this is the case, which organizations do you think they are and why would they be a better option than establishing ASIF?
  
2. **ASIF Technical activities:**

What do you think are the most important technical activities that ASIF would undertake?

**3. Relations between the AU, NEPAD and ASIF:**

The creation of ASIF will mean that the functions and responsibilities of those three bodies will have to be carefully designed. What do you consider to be the key issues in this relationship, and what are their implications for the design of ASIF?

**4. Relations between ASIF and other African regional scientific and innovation related organizations:**

The purpose of ASIF is to implement the CPA by mobilizing the technical and financial resources. In doing this it will need to work closely with the African scientific community and a range of other groups to ensure that technological innovation occurs.

What do you think are the types of organizations that should be considered as partners for ASIF? Can you give specific examples for each of the groups you identify?

**5. Governance issues**

Governance structure and instruments will depend on the type of institutional arrangement that ASIF becomes.

(a) What type of institution do you think is the most appropriate? Possible options might be an intergovernmental organization; an international non-governmental organization such as a foundation. We would like to solicit your views on these and other organizational frameworks.

(b) What criteria should be taken into account in designing the governance structure? For example, what balance should there be between government and non-government representatives? Should an effort be made to have gender and geographic balance? How can the voice of the users be heard?

(c) How can ASIF be designed to be innovative, flexible, non-bureaucratic, and transparent?

**6. Funding**

The CPA proposes that ASIF will explore various options for developing funding mechanisms and policies to secure African and external sources of finance.

(a) How can African countries be encouraged to develop national instruments to ensure financial contributions to regional programmes? Are there innovative ways of achieving this?

(b) Is there a place for non-voluntary contributions to regional programmes from African countries? If so, how should they be assessed?

(c) What kind of common policies can be put in place to encourage the private sector to contribute to the development of regional public science and technology-related goods?

(d) What measures and actions are required to encourage donors to contribute to ASIF according to the principles set out in the Paris Declaration and the Monterey Consensus to provide unified programmes, with common monitoring and evaluation procedures?

(e) The effective implementation of the CPA programmes requires diverse approaches to funding. What criteria should be developed and applied by ASIF to select institutions and individuals to be funded to implement regional programmes?

(f) How should research programmes be balanced between responsive<sup>1</sup> and directive modes of funding? Are there other approaches?

(g) Would ASIF commission research projects? If yes, what criteria would it apply to determine the kinds of research areas/issues and projects?

## 7. Organizational issues

The internal organization of ASIF will depend on the decisions taken about its legal status, missions and functions. At this stage in the exploratory process on the development of the proposed institutional arrangement it is only possible to consider the general principles which will guide the shaping of the organisational structure.

(a) What principles or criteria should guide the organizational structure of ASIF?

(b) In your view, what should be the balance within ASIF between the technical staff and the fund management staff? Why do you suggest this balance?

## 8. Monitoring and evaluation

The CPA envisages that ASIF will monitor and evaluate the implementation of CPA programmes and projects.

How should ASIF itself be evaluated? What should be the criteria for measuring its success?

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<sup>1</sup> The **responsive** mode of funding is where no constraints are placed on the field of research. It seeks to encourage the best researchers and the highest quality research. By contrast, the **directive** mode of funding is where the funding organization seeks to set the research agenda in some way, by prior specification of topic, method or outcome.