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**EXTRAORDINARY CONFERENCE OF  
THE AFRICAN MINISTERS COUNCIL ON  
SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (AMCOST)  
20 – 24 NOVEMBER 2006  
CAIRO, EGYPT**

**EXT/AU/MIN/ST/Rpt.(II)**

**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE MINISTERS**

## **REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE MINISTERS**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

1. The Extraordinary Meeting of the African Ministers' Conference on Science and Technology (AMCOST) was held from 23 – 24 November 2006, in Cairo Egypt to discuss various recommendations and issues raised by the experts in their preceding meeting from 20 – 21 November 2006. The AMCOST meeting was in preparation for the January 2007 Summit of Heads of State and Government that has been assigned the theme "Science, Technology and Research for Africa's Development". The Heads of State and Government will have an opportunity to cast a fresh re-appraisal on the role of science and technology for Africa's socio-economic development in view of the dynamic changes facing the continent.

### **II. ATTENDANCE**

2. The following AU Member States attended the meeting:

- |                            |                  |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Algeria                 | 14. Lesotho      |
| 2. Angola                  | 15. Libya        |
| 3. Cameroon                | 16. Malawi       |
| 4. Center African Republic | 17. Niger        |
| 5. Chad                    | 18. Nigeria      |
| 6. Comoros                 | 19. Senegal      |
| 7. Congo                   | 20. South Africa |
| 8. Egypt                   | 21. Sudan        |
| 9. Ethiopia                | 22. Togo         |
| 10. Gabon                  | 23. Tunisia      |
| 11. Gambia                 | 24. Uganda       |
| 12. Ghana                  | 25. Zambia       |
| 13. Kenya                  | 26. Zimbabwe     |

3. **Regional Economic Communities (Recs)**

1. CENSAD
2. ECCAS

4. Representatives of the following organization attended the meeting:

1. UNECA
2. UNESCO
3. UNDP
4. UNCCD
5. UNEP
6. League Of Arab States
7. World Bank
8. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ)
9. World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)
10. Institute of Research for Development, France

11. International Council for Science (ICSU)
12. Harvard University
13. Association of Commonwealth Universities
14. African Development Bank, ADB
15. African Academy of Sciences
16. Pan African Postal Union (PAPU)
17. IISD/AMCOST
18. Foundation For Democracy in Africa/Western Hemisphere African Diaspora Network, USA
19. Group on Earth Observations
20. International Institute for Sustainable Development

5. The following AU Member States were absent

- |                                 |                                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Benin                        | 15. Mali                             |
| 2. Botswana                     | 16. Mauritania                       |
| 3. Burkina Faso                 | 17. Mauritius                        |
| 4. Burundi                      | 18. Mozambique                       |
| 5. Cape Verde                   | 19. Namibia                          |
| 6. Cote d'Ivoire                | 20. Rwanda                           |
| 7. Democratic Republic of Congo | 21. Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic |
| 8. Djibouti                     | 22. Sao Tome & Principe              |
| 9. Equatorial Guinea            | 23. Seychelles                       |
| 10. Eritrea                     | 24. Sierra Leone                     |
| 11. Guinea                      | 25. Somalia                          |
| 12. Guinea Bissau               | 26. Swaziland                        |
| 13. Liberia                     | 27. Tanzania                         |
| 14. Madagascar                  |                                      |

### III. OPENING SESSION

6. The opening of the Extraordinary Conference of the African Ministers Council on Science and Technology took place at the National Research Centre, Cairo, Egypt on the 23 November 2006, in celebration of the Centre's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The African Union and Egyptian anthems were played.

7. Professor Nagia Essayed, the African Union Commissioner for the Human Resources Science and Technology, welcomed the participants and guests. She informed the meeting that the January 2007 Summit of the Heads of State and Government of the African Union, has been assigned the theme "Science, Technology and Research for Africa's Development".

8. According to Professor Essayed, the January 2007 Summit would be an opportune moment for Africa to make practical recommendations that would speedily achieve the goals and objectives of Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action. The attainment of these objectives required constant reorientation, review and monitoring of development policies and programmes to focus on long-term scientific and

technological sources of economic change and growth. In this connection, the recommendations would guide the African Union and its Member States to in implementing the Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action. She chronicled the events that took place in preparation of the Summit.

9. The Commissioner informed the participants that the Best Scientific Innovation Prize in Africa would be launched at the next Summit. She also highlighted the achievements the Commission in the areas of ICT, Youth and Education.

**Statement by Mr. Walter Erdelen, Assistant Director General for Science and Technology, UNESCO**

10. The Assistant Director General for Natural Sciences thanked the Egyptian government for hosting the AMCOST. He applauded the African Union and New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) for the efforts directed towards the implementation of the Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action. He concerted and focused efforts were required in achieving the goals.

11. He assured the meeting that UNESCO was rallying behind the Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action and was aligning its various programmes accordingly including harmonization and coordination of UNESCO's assistance. In this regard, he said UNESCO has participated in various meetings and workshops aimed to trigger the execution of the Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action. Today, there exists S&T clusters for cooperation between NEPAD and the UN agencies in S&T. UNESCO was ready to collaborate with the AU in its efforts to host the January 2007 Summit.

**Statement by H.E. Prof. Yaye Kene Gassama Dia, Chairperson of the African Ministers Conference for Science and Technology (AMCOST) the Minister of Science and Technology, Senegal**

12. In her statement, H.E. Professor Yaye Kene Gassama Dia stressed the commitment of the Heads of State in Science and Technology by choosing the theme "Science, Technology and Innovation for Africa's Socio-Development" for the January 2007 Summit.

13. This called for AMCOST to put in place mechanisms to execute Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan at regional and national levels. The Heads of State were also requested to invest in Science and Technology by committing to it 1% GDP. It was noted that investment in Science and Technology was the way to achieve sovereignty.

14. She applauded the efforts by the African Union, New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and partners towards the implementation of the Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan. She called on the AMCOST to capitalize on this political will of our Heads of State to actualize AMCOST recommendations.

**Official Opening address by H.E. Hany Helal, Minister for Scientific Research and Technology of the Arab Republic of Egypt**

15. The Minister welcomed the guests and extended to them greetings from the President of Egypt, H.E. Hosni Mubarak. He expressed pleasure in hosting AMCOST as Egypt celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its National Research Centre. He called on the guests and young scientists to tour the Centre.

16. He said that socio-economic development should be hinged on robust science and technology management with a view to achieving a knowledge-based society. This would require financial and human resources. The youth should also be encouraged to participate.

17. The Minister noted that instead of unnecessary competition, African countries needed to coordinate and establish clear objectives to drive collaborative programmes. The establishment of common Centres of Excellence would be one way to achieve this. He highlighted the challenges that Africa was currently facing such as ineffective management and governance of science and technology, establishment of research and development (R&D) based economies, and effective use and development of S&T human resources, among other things. He called on Africa to invest in science, technology, and innovation.

**Overview of the Programme of the Summit**

**By Professor Nagia Essayed, Commissioner of Human Resource, Science and Technology**

18. Professor Nagia gave an overview of the tentative programme for the January 2007 Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union which will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

19. She said that distinguished dignitaries and scientists such as Professor Calestous Juma, the Director of UNESCO Dr. Koichiro Mastuura, H.E. President Abudullah Wade of the Republic of Senegal, the current AMCOST chair, and H.E. President Paul Kagame of Rwanda, would be among the key speakers on science and technology at the Summit in January 2007.

20. Among other activities to take place during the 2007 Summit is the joint African Union and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa exhibition by African scientists, companies, and organizations to showcase products and innovations that are making a difference in peoples lives. She requested the participants to collect information on the planned Exhibition.

**Presentation by Representative of High-level African Panel on Modern Biotechnology**

21. Professor Ismail Serageldin made a presentation on the findings of the High-level African Panel on Modern Biotechnology. He discussed the need for building capacities in S&T through enabling policy formulation, human resources development, and, in

particular, the involvement of youth, development of institutions, establishment of public-private initiatives, and financing implementation.

22. He noted that Africa was too big to be dealt with as one entity and, as such, he proposed that biotechnology activities should proceed in the context of regional innovation communities.

23. Areas of priority in biotechnology should be linked to regional specializations such as HIV/Aids in Southern Africa; drug manufacturing in northern Africa; livestock research in eastern Africa; agricultural biotechnology in the West Africa; and biodiversity in central Africa.

24. Prof. Seragaldin said that Africa needed to immediately expand biotechnology training, and improve infrastructure to enhance opportunities for biotechnological investments.

25. He also suggested that Africa should adopt the co-evolutionary approach where biosafety goes hand in hand with the developments in biotechnology.

26. In conclusion, Professor Seragaldin recognized the great potential in supporting biotechnology research and development (R & D) and, indeed, developing African regional innovation communities and local innovation areas.

#### **IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

27. The Chairperson of the Conference of the African Ministers Council on Science and Technology, Professor Gassama Dia, introduced the agenda, which was adopted without amendments.

28. Ministers and representatives introduced themselves and made opening remarks. They expressed appreciation for the invitations extended to them, and were looking forward to rewarding discussions in preparation for the January 2007 Summit.

#### **V. PRESENTATION OF EXPERTS' REPORT**

29. The Chairman the Experts Meeting, Professor Papa El Hassan Diop, presented the report of the experts and highlighted all the documents deliberated and the recommendations that emanated. The report highlighted the following key points and recommendations:

- The importance of biotechnology to Africa's socio-economic development in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs);
- The need to integrate biotechnology with biosafety concerns;

- The lack of consensus on the issue of the African Presidential Council on Science and Technology and that the matter was being brought before the Ministers to decide on the way forward;
- The fact that the issue of the African Science and Innovation Facility (ASIF) was debated by the Experts, but no definitive conclusion had been reached, and now the matter was placed before the Ministers for consideration;
- That policies on technology transfer and acquisition of technological capabilities should emphasize convergence of science and technology policies with economic and industrial policies;
- The need to involve the Diaspora and to engage the NGOs in science and technology for the realisation of the African Union Vision;
- The recommendations from the First African Union Congress of Scientists and Policy Makers that sought to promote dialogue on “Science for Policy and Policy for Science”;
- The need to establish a Pan-African Intellectual Property Organization to address knowledge management;
- That Africa’s Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action would be implemented through dynamic Centres of Excellence;
- The request by The Republic of Kenya to host the next AMCOST 2007 in Nairobi.

## **VI. DISCUSSION OF THE EXPERTS REPORT**

30. It was suggested that reports or summaries of AMCOSTs planned deliberations should be circulated well in advance to give Ministers sufficient time to go through the subject matter and various recommendations.

31. It was observed that there should be consistency in the way the Summit theme was phrased. A proposal that read, “Science, Technology, and Innovation for Africa’s Socio-Economic Development of Africa” was put forward.

32. It was suggested that reports to the Heads of State and Government should be concise with priority recommendations well laid out.

Comments made and issues raised on the sections of the experts report are as follows:

### **Draft Report of the High-level Biotechnology Panel and Biosafety**

33. It was recommended that biosafety and biotechnology should be dealt with concurrently due to their complimentary nature.

34. The Biotechnology Strategy was highly applauded as an African initiative to embark on biotechnology research and development (R & D) and, consequently, developing African regional innovation communities.

35. The Ministers endorsed the Strategy on Biotechnology High-level Panel.

### **Proposal for the formation of the Presidents' Council for S&T, (APCST)**

36. The proposal for the formation of African Presidential Council for Science and Technology (APCST) was generally not agreed to, since AMCOST was well positioned to deal with most of the functions of such a Council. However it was acknowledged that the African Presidents' Council of Science and Technology would enhance visibility of the science and technology issues at a higher political level.

### **African Strategy for Technology Transfer and Acquisition of Domestic Technological Capabilities**

37. It was noted that there was need to establish collaborative programmes between advanced Member States and lagging States to encourage technology transfer amongst the African Countries.

### **Report of the Conferences of the Diaspora and African NGOs on the Popularization of S&T**

38. It was recommended to encourage more women and youth in S&T disciplines.

39. Also noted was the role of the media and AMCOST was advised to engage the media in S&T popularisation.

### **Establishing a Pan-African Intellectual Property Organization (PAIPO)**

40. Some Member States were not members of the existing African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) or Organisation Africaine de la Propriété Intellectuelle (OAPI) and therefore the creation of a Pan-African Intellectual Property Organization (PAIPO) was recommended since it would harmonize and streamline IP activities while catering for all Member States of the African Union.

### **First African Union Congress of Scientists and Policy Makers**

41. Contributions from delegates emphasized the importance of crafting a marketing strategy for S&T, as some noted that not much was being done to convince Heads of State and Government that S&T were a driving force for socio-economic and sustainable development.

42. The declaration of 2008 as an S&T year was contested on the ground that we should capitalize on the January 2007 Summit where Heads of State and Government would discuss an S&T theme. It was noted that it would take at least a year to prepare for the year of S&T and other activities, and hence 2008 was a good option.

43. Several countries noted that the 1% commitment would help in strengthening national-level facilities. There was an extended debate about whether countries should commit 1% of their GDPs to science and technology. The overall view was that, whether rich or poor, every country had a GDP, and should be working towards the 1% GDP bench mark so would be directing resources according to its ability to generate wealth.

### **Designing a Model for the African Science and Innovation Facility (ASIF) to Implement the Science & Technology Consolidated Plan of Action**

44. Several delegates were opposed to the creation of new institutions since there would unnecessarily increasing overhead and running costs. Existing institutions should be allowed to mature and deliver their intended objectives.

45. It was generally agreed that the establishment of African Science and Innovation Facility (ASIF) as Fund and not Facility was most welcome since the creation of a Facility would be an additional cost. A Fund would be simply a flexible funding mechanism of the Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action and managed within existing organisations.

### **Criteria and Guidelines for Establishing African Networks of Centres of Excellence in Science and Technology**

46. The creation of networks of centres of excellence was supported by a number of delegates, as this would enable the continent to implement the Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action.

### **Presentation of Draft Ministers' Declaration**

The draft declaration was presented to the Ministers for consideration.

### **Discussion and adoption of the Ministers' Declaration**

47. Discussion took place on various provisions of the draft declaration where disagreements were significant. There was general agreement that S&T could be harnessed to realize the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and that such an emphasis should be relocated to the last sentence of the preamble to underscore its importance.

48. Questions were raised about the time horizon of 20 years for a Biotechnology Strategy term. The meeting was informed that this duration coincided with the time it

takes for research to yield fruitful results. Furthermore such a time span was propitious enough for international partnerships to be cemented.

49. The 1% of GDP to be geared towards funding S&T activities was subjected to debate. Some delegates observed that this target was hardly reachable not because some Member States lacked the resources, but because their commitments to S&T has been rather weak. In any case noted some delegates, this target (1%GDP) was accepted by Member States long ago, and should not absorb the attention of delegates unduly since the target itself was not a mandatory provision.

50. It was agreed that an African Science and Innovation Fund (ASIF) should be established to function purely as a mechanism to finance research and networks under existing institutional arrangements. The AMCOST Chairperson, Professor Gassama, pointed out that (ASIF) is already in place and was not formed outside existing institutional arrangements.

51. The meeting was reminded that the establishment of ASIF as a facility was endorsed by Ministers at an AMCOST meeting in 2005, and also received the stamp of authority from Heads of State and Government when the leaders accepted the Consolidated Plan of Action. It was indicated that negating the endorsement would represent backtracking on decisions already taken in earlier meetings.

52. The desire to promote the significance of S&T in the affairs of Member States was seen as vital especially in view of the participatory potential of women and youth.

53. It was suggested that the drive to popularise science would have a considerable impact if the importance of S&T was also well captured for the sake of women and youth.

54. The desire to declare 2008 as the S&T year was also discussed extensively under the Cairo Declaration segment. It was suggested that more time would be required to identify a series of activities, programmes, and benchmarks to represent celebratory events. It was agreed that 2007 be used to launch a longer period of S&T sensitization, popularisation and development in Africa. The prospective 2007 Summit has already focussed minds in several countries where some pilot projects have been conceived.

55. It was also noted that 30<sup>th</sup> June of every year represented AU's Scientific Revival Day, and 13<sup>th</sup> September was designated as the Technology and Intellectual Property Day. This was in response to a suggestion that a date could be designated to yearly celebrate S&T achievements.

56. The establishment of APCST generated much discussion with many Member States stressing that it should not be formed. One delegate suggested that Member States could form a "Supreme Council". Some delegates agreed to the proposal that APCST should not be formed, but felt that the AMCOST Bureau should be given an opportunity to re-consider the proposition.

57. When it came to express recommendations to the Heads of State and Government, the delegates called for loftier and more concrete proposals than the ones outlined.

### **Date and Venue of AMCOST 2007**

58. The meeting welcomed the offer by the Republic of Kenya to host African Ministers' Conference on Science and Technology (AMCOST) in 2007.

### **Closing Ceremony**

59. In her closing remarks, H.E. Prof. N. Essayed, the Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology thanked The Arab Republic of Egypt and the local AMCOST organizing committee for the eminent arrangements, organization, and the excellent hospitality. She also thanked the Ministers for their commitment and support towards to the development of science and technology in Africa. Furthermore, she thanked our partners who have supported us and enriched our discussions. She then thanked everyone would contributed to the success of AMCOST.

60. She said that the AMCOST was one of the most important meetings of the year, driven by Africa's ambitious strategy and roadmap towards January 2007 Summit. She said the AMCOST recommendations were a product that everyone would all like to own and to be identified with in January 2007. It was purely an African initiative, born and bred in Africa. She was convinced that Africa would never be the same again after the summit.

61. H.E. Prof. Yaye Kene Gassama Dia, Chairperson of the African Ministers Conference for Science and Technology (AMCOST) the Minister of Science and Technology, Senegal, thanked the hosting country and all the participants for their valuable contributions and recommendations towards the January 2007 Summit of Heads of State and Government.

62. H.E. Hany Helal, Minister for Scientific Research and Technology of the Arab Republic of Egypt closed the AMCOST meeting by thanking the participants for their valuable contributions that sought to address the challenges that Africa as continent was facing. He expressed great pleasure in hosting the AMCOST and was very pleased that the Ministers agreed on a number of recommendations to the summit. He wished every one a safe journey home.

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