

OPENING – AMCOST

Dr B Tema

Honourable President Wade, honourable ministers present here, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of the Chairman of the African Union, Prof Alpha Konare, let me start by thanking honourable President Wade for hosting this most significant Ministerial Conference of science and technology. This meeting is important because it is the first jointly organized conference by the AU and its programme NEPAD. We note with appreciation, President Wade, your interest and support of programmes of science and technology. You have just recently hosted Internet Governance meeting in preparation for the World Summit on Information Society. You also hosted the AU Ministerial meeting to develop Africa's common position to ICTs. We are especially grateful for the role you played towards the establishment of the Digital Solidarity Fund. Your kind of leadership can only be described as positive because Africa desperately needs champions to promote the importance of Science and Technology among AU Member States.

Experience from winning Asian and European countries teaches us that Africa's development is intimately linked with its science and technology capacity. This means that we should develop our own technical capacity to solve our problems. Our noble intentions to have food security in the continent, our plan to develop infrastructure and even to develop quality products to trade ultimately depend on our technological capacity. It takes scientists to build roads and bridges!

We hope that it is divine coincidence that this meeting at which we are going to unveil our science and technology business plan takes place in a country whose leadership already appreciates the role of science and technology in Africa's development. Our leaders need to ensure that our programmes have a secure funding base from our own national budgets, not just from donor funding. We therefore hope that as you have so valiantly mobilized for the establishment of the Digital Solidarity Fund, you will also mobilize for greater investment in science and technology by AU member states.

Once more on behalf of the Chairman of the African Union Commission, I would like to welcome all participants in this conference and wish you fruitful discussions.