

# OPENING STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY, Mr. ABDOULAYE WADE, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF SENEGAL

Honourable President of the National Assembly,  
Mr. President of the Higher Council of the Republic,  
Mr. Prime Minister,  
The African Union Commissioner,  
Honourable Ministers,  
Members of the Diplomatic Corps,  
Experts,  
Distinguished Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am particularly pleased to preside over the opening ceremony of the 2<sup>nd</sup> NEPAD Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology, on behalf of my Africa peers and on my own behalf.

Allow me to first of all, in the name of the Senegalese people, welcome all the participants from abroad who are here to attend this meeting with a view to sharing their experience with us and joining the African effort to reflect on the development of our dear continent through science and technology. Senegal is particularly proud and honoured to host the 2<sup>nd</sup> NEPAD Ministerial Conference on Science and Technology, which follows the session held in Johannesburg in November 2003. We hope that your stay in Senegal -the country of Teranga- will be both memorable and fruitful.

As Head of a State which has been confronted with the agonies of underdevelopment for over half a century, I have to underscore that it is increasingly necessary for us to strengthen our cooperation in the field of science and technology, within the framework of NEPAD.

Indeed, for a nation to properly cope with its economic and social development, it needs to institute an effective scientific and technological research system. This was perfectly understood by some Asian countries, like Malaysia and Korea, which were thus able to use scientific and technological research as a vehicle of development.

In Africa, several countries have, since independence, deployed efforts to develop a scientific base in order to initiate sustainable development. However, despite these efforts, negative development trends persist in many countries and the scientific and technological divide between countries of the North and those of the South is widening.

Today, scientific and technological progress has reached a scope beyond compare in countries of the North. The countries which master biotechnologies, electronics, information and communication technologies, astronomy, nuclear science and its numerous applications dominate the economy, control the global markets and impose their culture on the rest of the world. In a nutshell, to paraphrase Mr.

René MAHEU, former Director General of UNESCO, I would say that “Development is science that has become culture”

Senegal has perfectly understood this issue. Thus, in addition to devoting 40% of our budget to Education, I have decided to create a full fledged Ministry in charge of Scientific Research and Technical and Professional Training.

I intend to turn Senegal into an emerging country in which development will be based on the effective enhancement of research results.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a world characterised by the universalisation of civilisation through science and technology, Africa cannot and should not remain a passive consumer of technologies, but should fall into step with the rest of the world by developing a productive endogenous research capacity. It has become essential for us Africans, to bet on science and technology in order to avoid missing the rendezvous of history.

It is for this reason that we are meeting here this morning to discuss the theme “science and technology for Africa’s development: a plan for working together”. This meeting which is the continuation of the first African ministerial conference on science and technology, held in Johannesburg on 6 and 7 November 2003, under the aegis of NEPAD, which resulted in the setting up of the African ministerial council on science and technology, is a sign of revitalization for the African scientific community.

The two days of discussions, will certainly enable you to meet the goals set forth by this meeting, namely:

- The validation of the “*Plan for working together*”
- The consideration of financing mechanisms for projects and programmes
- The preparation of a draft resolution.

This “*Plan for working together*” which states our commitment to act in concert is underpinned by the following three conceptual pillars: a) capacity building; b) the production of knowledge and c) technological innovations.

The said plan goes beyond the recognition of the primary role of scientific and technological research as the driving force of development in Africa, and constitutes a strategic choice for the achievement of African Union and NEPAD objectives relative to science and technology as well as the accomplishment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

I would like to salute the African Union’s initiative to harmonise its action with that of NEPAD, and express the hope that this linkage between the “Political” and the “Technical” will perfectly meet the aspirations of our populations in the field of science and technology.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our pleasure is even greater when we consider that the plan we are discussing here today was designed by African experts. There is no doubt that it will usher in the appropriate solutions to the numerous development problems with which we are confronted. It is clear that emphasis would be laid on a more active and more practical conception of research, based on technological innovation through the enhancement, popularisation and utilisation of endogenous research results, but also by importing and adapting foreign technologies. There is need for the private sector, the youth and women to be at the centre of our programmes' mechanisms.

This explains why I am convinced that with this panel of experts from Africa and elsewhere, the outcome of this conference will keep the promise borne by NEPAD and the African Union to develop our continent through science and technology.

We will be very attentive to the implementation of this programme as it is essential to avoid a situation whereby NEPAD singles itself out by the organization of endless meetings. I urge you to concentrate on the basics, i.e. to have a realistic vision of the programmes and ensure that they are swiftly translated into action.

Let us not forget that our partners of the international community are attending the meeting and are listening to your interventions. They will thus appreciate the propriety of your proposals.

I cannot conclude without expressing my satisfaction and gratitude to the African scientific community, for its commitment in favour of our continent's development.

I wish you success in your deliberations and declare open, the 2<sup>nd</sup> NEPAD Conference of Science and Technology Ministers on the theme: "Science and Technology for Africa's development: a Plan to work together."

I thank you for your attention.