

TALKING POINTS BY GRETCHEN KALONJI, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR NATURAL SCIENCES, UNESCO DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE AFRICAN FORUM ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (STI) HELD IN NAIROBI, KENYA – APRIL 1, 2012

- It is an honour for me to welcome you to this African Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for Youth Employment, Human Capital Development and Inclusive Growth.

-I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude towards the Government of Kenya for hosting this Forum and I also wish to thank the African Development Bank, the African Union Commission (AUC), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) for the valuable and inspiring work that has been essential to design and put in place this Forum

WHY THIS FORUM

- For this, we hope that this forum will debate the role that Science, Technology and Innovation can play in this continent. We will listen to some examples and ideas coming from other continents, but mainly, this forum has been designed to create a dialogue space in Africa, by Africans and for Africans.

- few words on Youth : very important to encourage the integration of youth concerns and issues into the policy agendas of Member States, in order to create spaces and opportunities for empowering young people and giving recognition, visibility and credibility to their contributions

-This can be an opportunity to reflect on different realities that coexist in Africa, and also the common trends within the continent. The deliberations should nourish from the local expertise, from the variety of perspectives, from some experiences brought from abroad, and the lively debates that will hopefully take place the following days. Ultimately, it is an opportunity for African experts to examine the shared opportunities and to discuss ways to confront the existing challenges.

-In addition, this can be a time to reflect on how to conduct the strength that this continent has. Namely, a growing trend solidly sustained for the last 15 years, the superb potential of the growing youth population, an astonishing environmental abundance, a solid scientific community and a rich indigenous knowledge that is being respectfully integrated in the STI system.

-Hopefully this will also be the chance to get to know better our colleagues from neighboring countries and, therefore, this forum will contribute to strengthen the African STI networks. UNESCO has the aim of supporting these working networks that will contribute to the dissemination of STI policy knowledge. In addition, these networks will

also contribute to generate inspiring debates that will nourish the world STI analysis with new perspectives, coming from Africa, on the social roles that science, technology and innovation can have.

UNESCO WORK IN STI

- UNESCO is the only United Nations specialized agency with a specific mandate to promote science.

- UNESCO is a catalyst for the establishment of “scientific unions and bodies; initiatives with far-reaching implications for sustainable human security and well-being, such as the Man and the Biosphere Programme and the International Hydrological Programme”.

- Mention other major international programmes in the freshwater, marine, ecological, earth and basic sciences.

- In the field of STI policies, UNESCO has a long history in working with African countries. We are providing technical assistance for the formulation/review/implementation of national STI policies but we very much concentrate our efforts for developing capacities for STI governance and reform of the STI systems, innovation management and entrepreneurship. We understand our role as one of accompaniment, where the country fully owns the process and requests our technical advice on a particular domain or our support to develop its national capacities. We believe that it is essential to reinforce the capacities in STI policies, in order to ensure complete ownership of the development process.

- UNESCO's is also contributing to the implementation of the Africa's Science and Technology Consolidated Plan of Action and we will further continue our support for its development and implementation

- We are currently launching two new initiatives: the Science, Technology and Innovation Global Assessment Programme (STIGAP) and the Global Observatory on Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Instruments (GO-SPIN); which will benefit from the results of this Forum. STIGAP intends to enrich conventional STI monitoring systems by adding a bottom-up approach designed to fill-in the gaps in the global assessment of STI. In addition, STIGAP has a strong component of developing the capacities of local networks in order to help promote their intellectual results. On the other hand, GO-SPIN is a revolutionary cluster of databases equipped with powerful graphic and analytical tools which has the potential to be the first global observatory on STI policies, providing end-users structural information on STI national systems; descriptions of STI national priorities and goals; STI legal frameworks texts; an inventory of STI operational policy instruments; description of international cooperation strategies; and more than 400 temporal series of indicators on STI, innovation surveys, gender, economy, energy, environment, governance, social issues, among others.