

**Official Opening of the Second Ministerial Forum on Science, Technology and
Innovation (STI) in Africa**

Rabat, Morocco, October 15, 2014

**Speech by Oley Dibba-Wadda
Executive Secretary, ADEA**

- Your Excellency Hon. Lahcen Daoudi, Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Executive Training of Morocco,
- Honorable Dr. Martial De-Paul Ikounga, Commissioner, Human Resources, Science and technology, of the African Union Commission,
- Honorable Christina Harttila, Ambassador of Finland to Morocco,
- Honorable Yacine Fal, Resident Representative of the African Development bank in Morocco,
- Honorable Amina Al-Hajri, Deputy Director General of ISESCO,
- Honorable Getachew Engida, Deputy Director General, UNESCO,
- Honorable Ministers,
- Distinguished delegates,
- Distinguished technical and financial partners and experts,
- Representatives of the media,

- Ladies and Gentlemen,
- All Protocols respectfully observed
- Good morning

It is an honor and privilege for me to be speaking to this august gathering today.

As I was preparing for this 2nd Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), I asked myself on reflection, how the situation in STI has evolved since the 1st STI Forum held in Nairobi in 2013 and similarly, since the ADEA Triennale held in Ouagadougou in 2012 in which the theme of the Triennale focused on “Critical Skills, Knowledge and Qualifications for Africa’s Sustainable Development”?

The Triennale emphasized the key importance of:

Science and technology for unlocking Africa’s abundant resources; developing strategic responses to Africa’s development challenges and; un-leashing the tremendous potential for economic growth in Africa.

It was refreshing for me to come across the recent publication report of the World Bank and El Sevier titled, “A Decade of Development in Sub-Saharan African Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Research”.

It was even more so, reassuring to realize that the report reveals the main developments in research in Africa over the past decade from 2003 and 2014.

The report reveals patterns that are predictors of Africa's future scientific and educational ability to train knowledge workers and solve Africa's development challenges. It underscored the following:

- While Africa has increased the quality and doubled its research outputs between 2003 and 2014, it still accounts for less than 1 percent of the world's research output - a far cry from its share of global population which is at 12%;
- It also underscored that Research outputs of sub-Saharan Africa relies heavily on international collaboration and visiting faculties;
- That the transitory nature of many global researchers prevents these researchers from building relationships with African institutions and African governments, thereby reducing the economic impact and relevance of research in Africa.
- That the Inter-regional exchange within the African continent is low, resulting in limited knowledge transfer and collaboration between African academics and the corporate sector;
- That Sub-Saharan Africa's research output in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) lags behind that of other subject areas, such as the health and agriculture

sectors. However, with reference to the latter, it is encouraging to see increased attention to research in health in Africa particularly as we struggle to contain the current challenges experienced in West Africa with the Ebola pandemic.

Further analyses in the report argue that to accelerate economic transformation, SSA needs increased and better STEM skills and knowledge to boost value added productivity within key sectors such as the extractive industries, energy, transport and manufacturing.

As such, critical concerns are raised in the report on the lack of internal African research capacity and critical mass to produce international quality research by Africans, especially on STEM.

In view of the concern raised, how can we therefore reduce Africa's reliance on international research and build Africa's scientific and educational ability to solve Africa's development challenges by African's for Africa?

As we discuss, interact, engage and deliberate over the next three days, I encourage us to think about how we can take steps to accelerate strengthening the FOUNDATIONS of science and technology in Africa, through reforms affecting our education and training systems particularly for African women and girls:

- To improve the teaching and learning of math and science from primary to tertiary level;
- Improve the quality of teacher education in science and mathematics with emphasis on female teachers;
- Strengthen higher education and research institutions to increase human capital in STEM and encourage more women and girls to participate;
- Upscale post graduate higher education STI programs;
- Adapt Technical Vocational Skills Development (TVSD) programs to enable increased number of learners to acquire scientific and technological skills and encourage more women and girls to participate;
- Encourage regional programs and initiatives; and
- Promote gender-sensitive programs that encourage women and girls' participation and success in math, science and technology.

I wish us all fruitful deliberations and take this opportunity to thank the government of Morocco for the warm welcome and hospitality.

I thank you all!