

**SENIOR EXPERTS DIALOGUE ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY  
AND INNOVATION AND THE AFRICAN TRANSFORMATION  
AGENDA**

**ON**

***“CITIES AS INNOVATION HUBS FOR AFRICA’S TRANSFORMATION”***

**DATE: 2 – 4 November 2016**

**VENUE: Sierra Burgers Park Hotel,  
Pretoria, SOUTH AFRICA**

**ORGANIZED BY**

**THE UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA (ECA), AFRICAN  
UNION COMMISSION (AUC),**

**THE NEPAD PLANNING AND COORDINATING AGENCY (NPCA)**

**HOSTED BY**

**THE DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

## I Background

The “*Senior Experts Dialogue on Science, Technology and Innovation and the African Transformation Agenda*” (SED) is an initiative of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) designed to support member States to leverage science, technology and innovation (STI) to drive the structural transformation of their economies. The impetus for the SED comes from two principal sources: a) the general recognition that most of Africa’s development challenges are amenable to resolution through the careful and purposeful application of STI, and b) the recognition by the international community that STI is an important means of implementation of the outcomes of recent UN summits including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development; Rio+20; the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs), the Istanbul Programme of Action for Least Developed Countries, and the African Union’s long-term plan for the structural transformation of the continent – Agenda 2063 (AU 2014), along with the continental Science Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA 2024).

SED provides an arena for rigorous interrogation of STI policies and frameworks, discussion of emerging issues in STI, experience sharing and peer learning. In this role, it provides a platform for surfacing, identifying, and addressing leading issues likely to enhance the ability of African countries to harness STI to achieve their structural transformation and sustainable development objectives.

The first SED was held in 2014 in Abuja, Nigeria with the support of the Federal Ministry of Science and Technology of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on the theme “*Making New Technologies Work for Africa*” The second was held in Nairobi Kenya in 2015 on the theme “*Innovation Hubs, Clusters and Parks and Africa’s Transformation*” and was co-organized with and hosted by the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) of the Government of Kenya. The 2016 SED on the theme “*Cities as Innovation hubs (or Cities as Centres of Innovation)*” will be held, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency in South Africa with the support of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) of the Republic of South Africa.

## II Theme

The theme of SED-2016, *Cities as innovation hubs for Africa's Transformation* has been a recurring sub-theme of past SEDs. Its choice is thus a response and a follow up the outcomes of the previous SEDs. As well, the theme responds to SDG 9 on "building resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and fostering innovation", SDG 11 on making “cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable and SDG 17 (Global partnerships) Target 2 on technology. As already noted above, the theme also responds to the AU’s Agenda 2063 and STISA 2024.

At the institutional level, the theme and the background research that will support it advance the outcome of SED-2015 on Innovation hubs, clusters and parks and on-going research on the subject. SED-2016 also complements ongoing research at ECA that seeks to understand how African countries can harness their rapid pace of urbanization as an additional instrument to drive their industrialization efforts<sup>1</sup>. Finally, the theme keys into the Development Account research project jointly executed by ECA and UN Habitat, on the role of urbanization in structural transformation.

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<sup>1</sup> Subject of the 2017 Economic Report on Africa

Cities account for a large share of gross domestic product (GDP), manufacturing and service value added, total exports, formal employment and domestic market, among others. For example, Johannesburg accounts for 17% of South Africa's GDP and 47% of Gauteng Province and has an influx of 10,000 people per month. Similarly, Lagos contributes 7% of the Nigerian GDP and 53% of manufacturing employment in the country.

Africa, second to Asia in the rate of urbanization, is likely to see her cities expand and grow in number. There are already three mega cities (cities with population close to or larger than 10 million) on the continent: Cairo (Egypt), Lagos (Nigeria) and Kinshasa (Congo, D.R) and about 83 cities with a population of over 1 million. The number and size of cities has been growing steadily. It is thus expected that about 23 African countries will see a 3-fold growth in their urban population or more<sup>2</sup> by 2030.

In addition to the rapid rate of urbanization, a number of additional factors compel a re-examination of the role of African cities which continue to serve largely as administrative, economic and trade hubs in the age of smart technologies. These factors include: rising share of cities' contribution to the gross domestic product of most African countries; Africa's youth surge and the fact that youth comprise the inquisitive and most innovative segment of any population; the evolving role of cities as agglomerations, not just of people but also of industries, the arts and culture and educational establishments; and the emergence of knowledge and innovation as important drivers of national competitiveness.

The above discussion raises two principal challenges. The first is the challenge of improving the competitiveness of Africa's cities in absolute terms and relative to other cities of the world. "Improving the competitiveness of cities", it has been argued, "would eradicate poverty and increase shared prosperity through the creation of millions of additional jobs"<sup>3</sup>. Currently, many African cities are unplanned, over-crowded and polluted, have poor housing and other infrastructure, disconnected and isolated from other cities and global innovation centres and thus expensive for business development<sup>4</sup>. Support for this view is evident in the decision of several African countries to either build new cities (technology and innovation cities) or modernize existing cities or both. The second challenge - which is a corollary of the first - is to turn many of Africa's existing cities<sup>5</sup> from administrative, economic (manufacturing) and trade hubs into innovation hubs (or centers of innovation).

Technology and innovation is key to transforming African cities into inclusive, safe and sustainable human settlements<sup>6</sup>. Many African countries have recognized this need and are beginning to take measures to address it. These measures include the development of new cities focussed on innovation and the knowledge economy like Konza and Tatu cities (Kenya); Hope City (Ghana); Centenary and Eko Atlantic (Nigeria); Kigamboni (Tanzania), The Capital Cairo (Egypt); Cite le Flueve (DR

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<sup>2</sup> Estimated based on UN Population Database accessed June 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Africa Pulse (2016) An analysis of issues shaping Africa's economic future, April 2016, Volume 13

<sup>4</sup> World Bank (2015) Boosting Tech Innovation Ecosystems in cities, Discussion paper 100899

<sup>5</sup> Most of these cities were created as administrative centres (provincial and district headquarters/capitals) by the colonial authorities.

<sup>6</sup> Sustainable Development Goal 11

Congo). To address the second challenge, there are efforts to use technology to transform existing cities. Examples include Kigali (Rwanda), Innovate Lagos<sup>7</sup> (Nigeria) and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia)

### **III Objectives**

Flowing from the above, the objectives of SED-2016 are to identify:

- The main opportunities and challenges at different policy and organizational levels for leveraging and maximizing the rapid rise of cities (including the rise of mega-cities) in Africa to drive innovation and invention;
- The key elements and issues (based on local as well as international experience) that African governments, along with their international development partners, can take into account in formulating action plans to turn their cities from manufacturing and trade hubs into innovation hubs and centres;
- How African countries can deploy existing technologies and innovation to advance and improve the efficiency of their cities to enable them serve as innovation hubs and centres;
- Possible set of regulatory reforms that could facilitate the ability of Africa's cities to foster innovation;
- A set of indicators for assessing the performance of African cities as centres/hubs of innovation.

### **IV Expected Results**

The expected results include, amongst others, the following:

- Research and analytical report on "Cities as hubs of Innovation in Africa";
- A policymaker's guide and recommendations for consideration (and adoption) by African governments, their development partners and the private sector.
- A consolidated set of indicators for assessing African cities as innovation hubs
- Policy briefs and working papers;

### **V Participation**

Participation is by invitation only. Invitations will be extended by the organizers to African Ministries responsible for Science, Technology and Innovation, Ministries responsible for Urban and City Planning, selected academic and continental institutions, UN agencies, multi-lateral and bilateral development agencies and NGOs/CSOs to nominate senior experts.

### **VI Venue: Sierra Burgers Park Hotel, Pretoria, South Africa.**

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<sup>7</sup> Lagos also recently signed an agreement with Dubai to "create Africa's first smart city"  
<http://www.dailynigerianews.com/2016/06/21/lagos-state-signs-smart-city-deal-with-dubai/>

**VII Date:** 2-4 November, 2016

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