

## STEPS TO INNOVATION

### Conference on Africa-Europe Partnerships for Global Challenges

Second CAAST-Net<sup>1</sup> stakeholders' conference  
on Africa-Europe S&T cooperation

24<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> of April 2012, Dakar, Senegal

### Background

The 2007 Joint Africa-EU Strategy formalises a new Africa-Europe political relationship and recognises the mutual interest and benefit arising from bi-regional cooperation based on equitable partnerships for addressing global and developmental challenges.

Set against the background of a global consensus on the vital contributions of scientific and technological research, development and innovation to addressing global challenges, and of the common policy goals of increasing investment in S&T capacity, the two continents are forging an ever closer relationship in scientific and technological R&D, addressing issues of common interest.

Innovation too is high on the policy agenda in both Europe and Africa. Innovation policies and systems are key to the translation of R&D outputs into novel technologies, goods and services, but innovation is also seen as a major driver of economic growth and therefore as a significant determinant of emergence from the global recession. In 2011, the first senior officials meeting of the Africa-EU-Policy Dialogue on STI in Addis Ababa highlighted the role of innovation both for fostering the knowledge base of societies and economies and for addressing global societal challenges. In the specific context of bi-regional S&T cooperation partnerships for addressing global societal challenges, the role of innovation has however, until recently, received relatively little attention.

The forthcoming stakeholders' conference has been conceived therefore as an opportunity to enrich and strengthen the Africa-Europe STI cooperation relationship through providing a forum for exchange of opinions, sharing and mutual learning between stakeholders and experts from Africa and Europe. Taking the topics of the 2009 Coordinated Call for Africa<sup>2</sup> as the conference theme and drawing on practical examples of past and on-going S&T bi-regional cooperation initiatives as case studies, the conference will explore a range of issues related to the role of innovation systems and policies in the context of bi-regional cooperation, with a view to enhancing the contributions of R&D to identifying solutions to global challenges.

### Objectives

1. Sharing of opinion and mutual learning on approaches to innovation processes and policies for enhancing the value of bi-regional cooperation.
2. Drawing on conference exchanges, to formulate evidence of good practice in innovation process and policies for informing regional STI authorities and enriching the formal bi-regional STI policy dialogue.

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<sup>1</sup> The project CAAST-Net, funded by the European Commission under the 7<sup>th</sup> EU Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7), has been developed as a high-level platform to advance international cooperation in science and technology between Europe and sub-Saharan Africa for mutual benefit. Enhancing the policy dialogue among African and European stakeholders around research and innovation responses to regional and global challenges is one strategic activity of the CAAST-Net project.

<sup>2</sup> The 2009 Coordinated Call for Africa was a €63 million joint FP7 call from three thematic directorates of the EC's DG RTD for proposals in the fields of water and food security, and health for Africa. Approximately 25 Africa-Europe cooperation projects have been funded under the call.

3. Fostering exchange and networking among bi-regional STI cooperation projects, particularly around strategies for the translation and adoption of outputs into technologies, goods and services.

## Expected Outcomes

- Improved mutual understanding of the perceptions, roles and success factors of innovation policies and systems in Africa and Europe.
- Scenarios for enhancing the outcomes of Africa-Europe cooperation partnerships through joint innovation activities for translation of R&D outputs into technologies, services and goods for addressing global societal challenges.
- Conference proceedings and a peer-reviewed policy paper on innovation and bi-regional STI cooperation partnerships.

## Conference Structure

- **A two-day stakeholders' conference consisting of:**
  - Key note speeches on knowledge-based innovation for addressing global challenges;
  - Good practice examples for fostering innovation and their application to projects supported through the FP7 Call for Africa;
  - Parallel workshops on the issues
    1. promoting industry-academia relationships and entrepreneurship
    2. commercialisation of different sources of knowledge
    3. protecting knowledge and innovations
    4. securing financing to foster innovation processes;
  - Presentation and panel discussion on the outcomes of the workshops;
  - Parallel poster sessions for Africa-Europe cooperation projects.
- **Participation will be by invitation only for approximately 100 experts and stakeholders from both regions including representatives from some or all of the following groups:**
  - Policy stakeholders
  - Academics and research scientists
  - Bi-regional ST cooperation projects (incl. projects supported by the FP7 Call for Africa)
  - Local authorities and NGOs
  - Technology transfer and private sector
  - Financial and legal experts
  - African Diaspora organisations and organisations of returnees
  - Civil society
  - Implementing governmental agencies
  - International organisations