

**1<sup>st</sup> Draft**

**AFRICAN UNION INCLUSIVE /COMMUNITY BASED INNOVATION  
INITIATIVE**

**Member States Capacity Building  
&**

**1<sup>st</sup> Pan African Souk**

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# CONCEPT PAPER

## i. Introduction

Science and Technology development is critical to the promotion of overall growth and prosperity of the continent. To enhance such development, there is need for sound strategies that will reduce the uncertainties or risks faced by entrepreneurs and industrialists and further generate and disseminate information about investment opportunities in Science and Technology for industry. The overarching continental framework for development AU Agenda 2063 is critical in this regards. There are many sectoral policies, strategies and frameworks that are geared towards a common goal of the Agenda 2063; while, it recognizes Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) as multi-functional tools and an enabler for achieving its development aspirations and objectives. In the same vein, the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2014- 2024 (STISA 2024) is developed to facilitate transition of the continent from commodity based to innovation-led and knowledge based economy.

The mechanism under which this will be achieved is also encapsulated in the STISA 2024 pillars “upgrading/building research infrastructure; enhancing technical and professional competencies; innovation and entrepreneurship; and providing an enabling environment”. This called for an implementation framework of the strategy where it was further subjected to analytical study. The resultant output of the analysis identified the policy gaps and institutional arrangements that may exist or not in the majority of the African Union Member States and/or Regional Economic Communities. The gaps and the arrangements are must for STISA 2024 integration in national and regional STI processes that is currently ongoing.

The analysis took into cognisance the AU Member States and the RECs are at different stages of readiness in terms of finance, infrastructure, human and organizational capacity to properly undertake activities/actions that address the STISA 2024; minimum set of requisite infrastructure human resources with the required skills and an enabling environment. The detailed outcome of the analysis produced 13 policies and 7 institutions; where INCLUSIVE INNOVATION and COMMUNITY BASED INNOVATION were given preference in responding to the needs of the bottom of the consumer pyramid in the continent.

It is further clearly indicated that this will bring sustained growth, competitiveness and economic transformation with the required sustained investment in new technologies with continuous innovation in all areas of endeavours.

Against this back drop the African Union, Scientific, Technical and Research Commission (AU-STRC) as a specialized institution of the AU; as one of its flagship initiative “**AFRICAN UNION INCLUSIVE /COMMUNITY BASED INNOVATION INITIATIVE**”. Inclusive Innovation is any innovation that leads to affordable access to quality goods and services for the poor on a sustainable basis, serves a real need, effective and with extensive outreach. While Community based innovation are innovations that are driven by community needs where research institutions are more informed with their local community needs.

ii. **African Union Inclusive and Community Based Innovation Initiative:**

The African Union Inclusive and Community Based Innovation Initiative has the following Objectives

- a. To build the entrepreneurs capacity of the Africa’s researchers, inventors and innovators
- b. To encourage Africans to take up careers in STI
- c. To ease implementation of continental strategies and policies
- d. To improve intra-Africa trade through STI
- e. To encourage the participation of Africa’s financial institution, business communities, Governments to incubate Africa’s entrepreneurs and STI products
- f. To demonstrate the potential investment return in Africa’s based inventors and innovators
- g. To respond to Africa’s community challenges and economic prosperity by enhancing intra-Africa trade

This initiative is segmented into two; **Member States Capacity Building** in inclusive and community base innovation and the showcasing of the products of knowledge in goods and services termed the **1<sup>st</sup> Pan African Souk**.

## **Member States Capacity Building:**

It is indisputably true, that most successful economies in the world are innovative, and creation of new ideas and technologies that leads to invention of products, services, machinery and infrastructure which improves human standard of living and quality of life. Considering the growing necessity for building technical competence of Member States' STI staff is to enhance professionalism and equip them with requisite skills to boost Africa's competitive advantage in the global market. Recalling that the Building Professional and Technical Competencies is a pillar of STISA 2024 and in its policy analysis recommended that building institutional capacities and promotion of professionalism.

An inclusive/community based initiative to build Member States capacity to benefit and address African challenges and on another hand, is a call for Industrialist, and Small and Medium Scales Enterprises, Parliamentarians, Government officials on the potentials embedded in the sector for Africa's socio-economic prosperity.

In addition, capacity building requires systems and mechanisms on inclusive/community based innovation and changing the landscape in research in Africa to be focused on community needs and market driven innovation. The mid-career STI staff and researchers of the Member State who are in most case at the front burner of the implementation and integration of continental policies needs to nuance of grasping what is required of them in inclusive and community based initiative of the African Union.

This further called for a paradigm shift in the way and manner research is conducted in the continent to be focused more on appropriate market driven research. This can never be achieved unless universities and research institute are determined to solve communities' immediate challenges and needs.

This segment of the initiative will be conducted through technical sessions that to address the gaps and the needs for having robust systems that support Inclusive and community based innovation.

(The work programme to be developed in due course.)

## **1<sup>st</sup> Pan African Souk:**

The Souk is a Kiswahili name for market and from the name there are several existing initiatives in the name of exhibition, exposition or others in the continent in the field of STI but this initiative's uniqueness in the mix of the stakeholders and is targeted towards inclusive and community based innovation or related only. Africa has recorded a lot of research work and inventions in the areas of inclusive and community based innovation notably the *M-Pesa* means mobile money transfer, Hippo-roller for conveying water, Urine malaria test, Crowd-farming etc.

This Souk intends to abridge the dichotomy in the continent within the knowledge producers (academia), the product and services producers (industries) and the policymakers that guide the former two. This is a whole new strategy to showcase a paradigm shift in approach to linking sectors working in silos with the same vision and through harnessing, building, and promoting Community Based Inclusive Innovation. The Souk is not only showcasing product and services but also an avenue to ignite curiosity of innovators and inventors with exposure to new products and service and will network the three sectors, and opens up a new nexus of approach to solving community challenges in Africa.

It is undisputable that opportunities for accessing and engaging Africa's good and services emanating from STI will also create awareness in STI to the appreciation of stakeholders.

The AU-STRC will invite Inventors, SMES, Research Institutions from its member states to show case how inclusive and community based innovation can respond to our development challenges in the following thematic areas: Water; Energy "Off grid and on grid systems"; waste management; Agriculture; and any other environmental innovative intervention that respond to our community's needs and challenges.

(A call for participation along with guide lines for selection of exhibitors to be developed by the exhibition selection committee in due course)

## **VENUE**

**Abuja International Conference Centre (TBD)**