

INNOVATION AND AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

CSIR-STEPRI AUDITORIUM, 3RD - 5TH NOVEMBER, 2014

***OPENING ADDRESS BY THE HON. MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT, SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION, HON. AKWASI OPPONG- FOSU***

MR. Chairman the Director-General of the CSIR, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It gives me great pleasure to be part of this important conference on Innovation and African Development. I understand it is not just a conference. It is also a training programme on innovation. I wish therefore to commend the Technology and Management Centre for Development (TMCD) of the University of Oxford (UK) and the Science and Technology Policy Research Institute (STEPRI) for taking the initiative to organize this Conference and also inviting the Ministry to share in the findings and conclusions from their studies in Ghana. I need to emphasize that no research should be considered complete until the policy makers and other stakeholders have been sensitized to the import of the study.

Mr Chairman, the Government of Ghana has ambitious plans for the country. As has been elaborated in the new Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda II (2014 – 2017), we aim at moving beyond the present level of lower middle income status to achieve a GDP per capita of \$3,000 by 2020. In order to achieve this ambitious goal we will necessarily have to ensure a more effective application of science, technology and innovation (STI). Science and technology have long been recognized as central to the growth and development of Ghana. Several attempts have been made in the past to promote the role of science, technology and innovation (STI) in the socio-economic development of the country. We have even formulated a National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, which we are committed to implementing. We remember when in 2000, a science and technology policy document was prepared and adopted by Cabinet. Yet, the policy was not implemented. One of the principal reasons was that, it was not accompanied by an implementation plan. Thus a renewed attempt was initiated in 2009 under the auspices of my ministry, to develop and implement a national STI to drive the development agenda of Ghana. In 2010 we adopted the national STI policy and went on to formulate and

implementation plan for the policy in 2011. Currently one of the important steps in implementing the policy is the funding of a programme to enable research institutes and universities to develop and transfer market-oriented technologies to entrepreneurs. Some \$2.5 million is being invested in this programme to underscore the commitment to innovation-driven development in Ghana. We hope our scientists will rise to the occasion and deliver on the programme. In the highly competitive world we are in, the crucial challenge is mastering innovation in all aspects of our socio-economic life.

The Government of Ghana recognizes the role of knowledge and innovation in transforming the economy, reducing poverty and increasing the country's competitiveness in international and regional trade. This recognition is reflected in various political and policy statements of the Government. The National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy, drives a vision of achieving a middle-income country based on STI application, adoption and development. The STI policy broadly aims at harnessing the nation's total STI capacity to achieve national objectives for wealth creation, poverty reduction, competitiveness of enterprises, sustainable environmental management and industrial growth. The basic objectives of the policy are to provide the framework for inter-institutional efforts in developing STI programmes in all sectors of the economy; create the conditions for the improvement of Scientific and technological infrastructure for research and development and innovation; ensure that STI supports Ghana's trade and export drive for greater competitiveness; and promote a science and technology culture.

Mr Chairman, the concept that innovation is created within systems of innovation has gained currency and is now widely used in academia and policy circles as an analytical framework for studying the scientific and technological performance of countries at the national, sub national or industry level. Innovation systems analysis can be used as a tool to help identify areas of weakness that may warrant attention. The main institutional actors in the national system of innovation are universities, public research and development institutes, policymaking bodies and government in general, private enterprises, financial institutions including development and commercial banks, and technology support agencies. The government is aware of the fact that innovation takes within a system. Therefore the government of Ghana is making all efforts to ensure all these institutions work effectively to promote innovativeness among firms and in

general in the country. We are able to make these efforts also because there is good collaboration in Ghana at the ministerial level. Our government is strongly constituted in cabinet and the spirit of solidarity permeating the ministers facilitates the systemic approach to addressing challenges.

Mr Chairman, Ghana's national system of innovation has the potential to grow and become dynamic. It has some institutional infrastructure for research and development, a growing private sector, some policy instruments, a new mechanism for funding research and development, universities dedicated to producing scientists and engineers, and institutions to support and regulate technology development. Admittedly, the national system of innovation is underdeveloped and not performing to the level at which it will enable the country to exceeding its aspiration of enhancing its middle-income status in the short term. However, my ministry is making all efforts to ensure that we are on track to make STI the wheels on which our national development moves.

Mr Chairman, I would like at this juncture to share some thoughts with you the participants on the three-year research project on the determinants and impact of technology transfer in low income countries. The project is a collaborative work between the Science and Technology Policy Research Institute (CSIR-STEPRI) and the University of Oxford (UK)- Technology and Management for Development (TMD) Centre. I understand that the aim of this project is to fill a knowledge gap by examining in-depth the diffusion of innovation in Ghana as may be reflecting the low income country conditions. It is an academic project that looks at the determinant factors and transmission channels for effective innovation creation, diffusion, and adoption in the private sector. The research was funded by ESRC-DFID and supported by UNCTAD and the Ghana government. I would like to suggest that even after the lifespan of the project, let us mainstream the research activities into our programmes. Indeed African governments should take innovation so seriously that we should rededicate ourselves to our own programmes such as the African Innovation Outlook that aims at tracking innovation performance in our countries. For us in Ghana, we must continue to track progress in innovation across the economic sectors and more importantly analyse the constraints and issues which we need to address to enhance innovation in our country.

Mr Chairman, it is encouraging to note that, the conference today is to disseminate the main findings from an innovation survey of more than 500 formal and informal firms in Ghana. I

encourage TMD and STEPRI to engage in more such researches to inform policy makers and government on some of the key developmental issues for the benefits of the citizenry. There is, therefore, no better time than this to apply STI to accelerate the growth and development of the country.

To conclude, Mr Chairman, I have taken note of the fact that you have a rather long and demanding agenda in front of you and for that reason, I would not like to keep you any longer than necessary. It is therefore my pleasure to wish you a very fruitful meeting and to declare this conference on Innovation and African Development officially open

Thank you very much for your attention.