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**EXECUTIVE COUNCIL**  
**Thirty-Eight Ordinary Session**  
**Videoconference**  
**03 - 04 February 2021**  
**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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**REPORT OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> EXTRAORDINARY VIRTUAL SESSION OF THE  
STC ON EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, 30 APRIL 2020**

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**Specialized Technical Committee on  
Education, Science and Technology, (STC-EST 3)  
Virtual Extra-Ordinary Session  
30<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, Time:14:30 – 18:30 (Addis Ababa time)**

**EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
Response to COVID-19**

**Ministerial Report**

*Ver 1.0\_6 May 2020*

## INTRODUCTION

1. The African Union Commission convened the first extraordinary virtual meeting of the Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST3) on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020 from 14:30 to 18:30 (GMT +3). During this high-level ministerial dialogue, the African Ministers considered a comprehensive Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (ESTI) Response for COVID-19, to ensure continuity of education on the continent despite the disruptions caused by the pandemic and to galvanise and accelerate science, technology and innovation actions to quell the pandemic.

## PARTICIPANTS

2. The following attended the meeting:

**(a) Member States:** Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cape Verde, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Comoros, Republic of the Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Libya, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan, Sudan, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

**(b) Regional Economic Communities:** Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

**(c) Development Partners:** 2iE, African Academy of Sciences (AAS), African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), African Development Bank (ADB), African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS), African Virtual University, ANCEFA, Association of African Universities, Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa [CEMASTEA], Commonwealth Association of Technical Universities and Polytechnics in Africa (CAPA), EU Delegation to AU, Forum for African Women Educationalists, GIZ, Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative, Global Partnership for Education, HP, INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY, International centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE), MENAPLN, Norway Permanent Mission to the AU, ONE Campaign, Plan International African Union Liaison Office, Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), Save the Children International, South African National Space Agency (SANSA), The African Early Childhood Network, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNFPALO, UNICEF, UNMISS-Juba-UNDP, VMware, WFP.

**(d) The African Union Commission:** Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology (HRST) with its Technical Offices (CIEFFA, IPED, AOSTI, and STRC); Department of Social Affairs and Africa CDC; Office of the Legal Counsel and DIC.

## **OPENING SESSION**

3. H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor, the African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology welcomed the Ministers to the Extraordinary Session of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology, and conveyed the greetings of the Chairperson, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat. She highlighted the objective of the meeting which is to provide a continent-wide Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Response to COVID-19, and the need for future preparedness. She acknowledged the Bureau of STC-EST 3 that convened its virtual meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> April 2020, and issued a strong communique for the Education and STI sectors to take concrete actions to ensure continuity of education and research and innovation response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. She further recounted how the coronavirus pandemic and its mitigation measures including border closures and social distancing are negatively impacting the already weak health, education, supply chains, markets and food systems on the continent. She lamented that the longer schools remain closed, the less likely children and young people will be able to catch up on learning and essential life skills that support a healthy transition to adulthood. Children who drop out of school will face not only a higher risk of child marriage, child labour, and teenage pregnancies, but will experience a precipitous fall in their potential lifetime earnings and will be left out of the continent's development. She underlined the urgency to transform Africa's education systems to respond to the ongoing pandemic and beyond, and the Commission in response is inviting Member States to implement the DOTSS initiative to ensure continuity of learning; monitoring, learning lessons and improving on practices; as well as planning for efficient reopening. The Commission has embarked on conducting a joint survey with UNESCO and AfDB on the impact of COVID-19 on education in Africa. She implored Member States to respond to the survey as it will inform and improve the response to COVID-19. Furthermore she outlined the science, technology and innovation interventions that include the creation of the ASRIC Advisory Board on COVID-19, setting-up of various scientific technical working groups to study the impacts of COVID-19 on Africa's food and nutritional security and the socio-economic impacts, Africa's indigenous knowledge on preventing, controlling and measuring infectious diseases in the continent utilizing an Afrocentric response like African traditional medicine. she concluded by calling on Member States to make all efforts to minimise the effects of COVID-19 on the implementation of Agenda 2063.

5. H.E. Dr. Tumwesigye Elioda, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Uganda and Chairperson of the STC-EST 3, welcomed members of the STC-EST 3 and all participants to the Extraordinary Session. He said the virtual meeting follows the Bureau meeting which saw the need to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on education, Science and Technology. Dr. Elioda thanked Member States, partners, the African CDC and the continent's health workers for their invaluable contributions in the fight against COVID-19. The STC-EST 3 Chair said COVID-19 underscored the role of Education, Science and Technology, especially research, and innovation as a guiding tool for evidence-based policy-making. The need to increase affordability of access to the internet, to digitalize Africa as highlighted in the previous EST meeting was also underlined by the STC-EST 3 Chair. The demand for key medical supplies and gear and devices has skyrocketed, whilst some producing countries have banned exports of medical supplies creating an opportunity for African countries to innovate and produce these materials locally.
6. With insufficient test kits and materials, the numbers could be deceiving, and vaccines could work differently in different locations. This, according to him, highlights the importance for Africa to participate in vaccine trials and for African countries to invest in STI in order to improve resilience. Whilst appreciating support from the international community, he called upon development partners to increase assistance for the continent and consider debt relief for African countries to strengthen their abilities to fight COVID-19.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 1: PROCEDURAL CONSIDERATION OF THE VIRTUAL STC-EST3**

7. The representative of the AU Office of the Legal Counsel clarified the following on procedural considerations of the virtual meetings of the STC-EST 3: (i) the rules of procedure of the STC apply to the virtual session including the provisions on quorum, participation and decision making and the Ministerial sessions require two thirds majority of Member States for a quorum, amounting to 36 Member State participants and (ii) Member State representatives are required to announce their presence through the online hand raising icon to be counted among the participants forming the quorum.
8. The meeting registered the participation of more than the required quorum with the attendance of 39 Member States.

#### **AGENDA ITEM 2: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF DRAFT AFRICAN EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

9. His Excellency, **Prof. Mamadou Talla**, the Minister of National Education of Senegal and the Rapporteur of the STC-EST 3, commended the organisation of the virtual meeting under the aegis of the AU to allow Member States to explore the Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He further pointed out the need to take protective measures and actions to fight against the proliferation of the coronavirus, as well as the importance of strengthening research and innovation, and national STI observatories, in Africa to build resilience of communities. He reiterated the need for Africa to use digital media to ensure continuity of education, and mitigation of the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable children and girls. He also encouraged increasing sectoral collaboration between Ministries of Finance and Ministries of Education, including accelerated seed funding for the implementation of response measures. He called on **Prof. Amadou Abdoul Sow** to present the Draft African Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Response to COVID-19 for consideration by the STC-EST 3.
10. In the discussions that ensued, Member States cited the collective and individual challenges being faced by African countries as a result of COVID-19, and mitigation strategies implemented at the national levels, as well as interventions to ensure continuity of education through distance models such as online, radio, and television, among others. They also shared ideas on how to scale-up initiatives with a continental dimension to alleviate the negative consequences of the pandemic; the plans for back to school campaigns and re-opening, including efforts to re-think education beyond COVID-19. They adduced efforts to address the challenges through science, technology and innovation interventions.
11. In the discussions that ensued, Member States embraced the draft ESTI response and expressed appreciation for its timely development. They cited the collective and individual challenges being faced by African countries as result of COVID-19, and mitigation strategies implemented at the national levels, to ensure continuity of education through distance models such as online, radio, television and newspapers, social networks, websites and interactive videoconferences between teachers and students. They also shared ideas on how to scale-up initiatives with a continental dimension to alleviate the negative consequences of the pandemic; the plans for back to school campaigns and re-opening, including efforts to re-think education beyond COVID-19. They adduced efforts to address the challenges through science, technology and innovation interventions including networking and sharing of research infrastructures.
12. The Member States raised the following key issues:
  - (a) Expressed appreciation to H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor, the Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology for timely organisation of the virtual STC-

EST 3 meeting to galvanize and harmonize continental efforts towards a comprehensive Education, Science, and Technology Response to COVID-19; welcomed the Draft ESTI Response to COVID-19 document and proposed to hold non-binding informal Ministerial Webinars to share experiences periodically.

- (b) Underscored the critical role of the Africa CDC in strengthening the capacity and capability of Africa's public health institutions, and planning and preparedness of Member States to take the necessary measures in combating outbreak of diseases in the continent.
- (c) Urged Member States to take advantage of the opportunity for online teaching and learning to ensure continuity of education on the continent, improvement of education systems and robust e-learning infrastructure, ensuring quality and integrating lessons learnt and good practices from COVID-19 response as espoused by the DOTSS approach, and conceiving a model roadmap for post COVID-19 which integrates continuity of education in the different regional and national responses.
- (d) Underlined the need to embrace and promote the creation and use of freely available and accessible Open Sources for learning, course and teaching materials, research, publications and information pertaining to the curriculum at schooling and university level in the continent;
- (e) Urged Member States to foster Open Science in the continent and lead on this process, not leaving the task to countries in the global north. African countries need to take initiatives in sharing their scientific research results and data amongst themselves, and boost intra-Africa research collaboration, including South-South, and North-South.
- (f) Called upon African countries to share ideas and best practices in developing alternative methods of assessment drawing from current lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic. Noted that traditional methods of assessment including examinations may need to be reconsidered as it may no longer be feasible to convene large examination sittings which may risk further transmission of the virus. Moving forward alternative methods such as ongoing-assessment may need to be explored through sharing expertise and experiences with online teaching and other methods of learning acceleration.
- (g) Africa to harmonize and adapt school calendars and speak with one voice on assessment and the organization of state examinations to give credence to student degrees; call for a joint African response to address the examination during the on-going school year which is affected by the pandemic and decide jointly on the cancellation or postponement of the school year.

- (h) Implored Member States to consider establishing accelerators for innovation in support of remote learning which is different from online learning. Other ways of facilitating access to learning material also need to be explored particularly for learners, students and vulnerable groups that may not have access to material provided online. Governments need to take steps in making municipal buildings and public libraries available for learners that may not have access to online connectivity and remote learning.
- (i) Called upon Member States to build capabilities of advanced methods and improve capacity for (statistical) data collection and analysis as well as establish repositories which in light of COVID-19, and other outbreaks can assist governments' and other relevant regional institutions in making important decisions and response interventions.
- (j) Underscored the need to streamline Africa's strategic research and innovation response on the epidemiology of COVID-19 and to focus on (a) Scientific Understanding of Corona Virus and COVID19; (b) Pharmaceutical and Biopharmaceutical Engineering; (c) Biomedical Engineering; (d) Clinical Understanding of Corona Viruses and COVID19 and (e) Formulation of National Health Strategies in Member States on COVID-19 and other epidemics.
- (k) Called upon the public and private actors, technical and financial partners, development partners, civil society, elected officials and local communities to support and accompany the educational continuity policies implemented in the various countries to maximise impact and ownership and take into account the concerns of private schools.
- (l) Emphasised the need for an exchange platform for African experts, scientists and researchers under the aegis of the African Union and the World Health Organization to evaluate and promote treatment protocols and other experiences by African researchers in line with the demographic and climatic realities of the continent.
- (m) Stressed the need to rapidly improve and develop productive capacity in Africa for supportive medical, supplies and personal protective equipment (PPEs) on a commercial scale, including ventilators, masks and gloves to support frontline workers in the fight against COVID-19. In the process promote the development of African technologies and solutions to respond to the crisis and minimise over-dependence on countries outside Africa.
- (n) Called upon the Member States to exploit current space technologies such as earth observation systems and geographic information systems (GIS) to monitor any



diseases at national, regional and continental level and publish annual regional reports on science, technology and innovation including the country health status for policy and decision-making.

- (o) Highlighted the importance of prioritising funding for education across Africa, deliberate investment in research and innovation and recalled on-going efforts to establish and operationalize the African Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Fund (ESTIF) and requested the Commission, the African Development Bank and ADEA to take appropriate action to expedite the process.
- (p) The ministers were appreciative of the virtual meeting as it provided them the opportunity for information exchange and they resolved to hold non-binding informal webinar between ministers to share their experience once every month or until the pandemic is over.

### **AGENDA ITEM 3: CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE DECISIONS AND REPORT OF THE STC - EST 3**

- 13. The Ministers considered the Draft African Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Response to COVID-19 and their Report, and adopted them with the amendments and contributions from Members States.

### **CLOSING SESSION**

- 14. H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor, the African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, thanked the Ministers, and development Partners for a very fruitful meeting. She also commended the efforts that Members States are deploying in their respective countries as STI response to COVID-19. She called for more investment in virtual education in Africa without compromising the quality of Education, with particular focus on vulnerable populations. She requested the Ministers to avail themselves for a meeting with partners to present their contributions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. She reiterated the need for Africa to revisit its education systems, and requested the Ministers to invest in the Pan African Virtual E-University (PAVEU) for comprehensive e-learning to realize the future of education in the continent.
- 15. H.E. Dr. Tumwesigye Elioda, Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation of Uganda and the Chairperson of the STC-EST 3, on behalf of the Bureau, appreciated the Ministers for attending the first ever virtual STC-EST. He also applauded countries that have considered debt relief for least developed countries. The STC-EST 3 encouraged the continuation of efforts on drug and vaccine research as well as the

safety of people. He expressed gratitude to researchers working on vaccines, commended the contribution from partners and called for the implementation of the recommendations adopted at the meeting. Dr. Elioda proposed a follow up meeting in the next 3 weeks which will focus on partners, and to come up with a clear action plan for ESTI.

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**SPECIALIZED TECHNICAL COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,  
(STC-EST 3)**

**Virtual Meeting**

**30<sup>th</sup> April, 2020**

**AFRICAN EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION RESPONSE  
TO COVID-19**

**MINISTERIAL DECISIONS (STC-EST 3)**

## **AFRICAN EDUCATION, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION RESPONSE TO COVID-19**

**WE**, the Ministers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> African Union Specialized Technical Committee On Education, Science and Technology (STC-EST 3), held our virtual ministerial meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020, to promote and maintain a high-level African ministerial dialogue to facilitate consensus on the Education, Science, Technology and Innovation response to COVID-19 and adopt urgent, radical and transformative measures to ensure continuity of education on the continent and mitigate the disruptions caused by the coronavirus disease;

1. **DEEPLY CONCERNED** with, the spread of COVID-19 globally and in Africa, the exponential figures of cases, the number of deaths recorded daily and the serious wider gap in education, health, gender, food security, water, economic and political consequences especially given the level of preparedness, response capacity and existing disease burden on health systems on the continent;
2. **ACKNOWLEDGE** the actions taken by the AU, Member States, RECs and other stakeholders including development partners to curb and contain the spread of COVID-19 at the national, regional and continental levels since the declaration by the World Health Organisation (WHO) of the outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), and their efforts in implementing public health policies and strategies such as total lockdown, quarantine, social distancing, infection control and containment, clear and transparent communication as well as complementary multi-sector response actions;
3. **EXPRESS APPRECIATION** for the positive role played by the World Health Organization (WHO) in coordinating a global response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the Africa CDC for empowering Member States to take the necessary measures in combating the outbreak of the disease and in mobilising responses from partners;
4. **TAKE NOTE** of the need to close learning institutions, schools, colleges and universities by governments to protect the population and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. However, this is worsening existing weaknesses in Africa's Education systems including disruptions of the education calendar, and social safety nets such as school feeding programmes, and millions of school children and young people who no longer have access to education on the continent especially in areas that do not have remote-learning capabilities and systems;
5. **RECOGNIZE** that the longer children and young people stay away from school, the less likely they are ever to return to school; that closure of schools should not be an

end to learning and that the COVID-19 pandemic will exacerbate existing inequalities and risks facing children, girls, disabled persons and other vulnerable populations;

6. **ACKNOWLEDGE** that unless we collectively act now to protect education systems by providing alternative learning platforms and complementary programmes, societies and economies will experience the burden of COVID-19 long after it has passed;
7. **STRONGLY UNDERSCORE** that the current coronavirus outbreak crisis in the whole world challenges our continent to provide rapid and strong responses from all disciplines of science, technology and innovation and deploy novel approaches underscored by evidence based policies and scientific advice for decision-making, to combat COVID-19 and other future deadly pandemics, by joining the entire world in the co-creation of knowledge and generation of cures, vaccines, new treatments, diagnostic tests and medical preventive systems among others;
8. **REITERATE** the need to effectively implement the continental strategies (a) Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25) and (b) Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024), to create strong education and science, technology and innovation systems on the continent that are crucial for the attainment of Agenda 2063 boosting socio-economic recovery from the current crisis, drawing on the lessons of Ebola and other humanitarian responses on the continent.

#### **WE HEREBY AGREE TO:**

1. **FOSTER** an Education Sector Response to COVID-19, where Members States should:
  - a) Based on the DOTSS<sup>1</sup> approach endorsed by the 3rd Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, ensure continuity of learning online and offline, particularly for children, girls, disabled persons and vulnerable populations in deprived communities without access to electricity and internet, recognising the role of parents in home schooling, and ensuring that teachers are skilled, capacitated and motivated to support learners offline and online and ensure that their physical, professional and emotional wellbeing are safeguarded.
  - b) Prioritise investments in Internet infrastructure and facilitate broadband connectivity coverage to all education institutions, schools, universities and colleges, particularly those in rural areas, and remote learning and teaching platforms and tools through digital technologies and traditional media such as radio

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<sup>1</sup> DOTSS is an acronym for Digital connectivity, Online and offline learning, Teachers as facilitators and motivators of learning, Safety online and offline, Skills focused learning

and television, and advocate for access to free data for a period and education content available through Telecom companies and other digital service providers such as search engines.

- c) Document the impact of school closures on children, girls, disabled persons and vulnerable populations, including those living in vulnerable conditions such as refugees, migrants, IDPs and asylum seekers. Member states should also document good practices, and monitor learning engagement with support from local and international partners, and with the view of sharing information with AUC to facilitate inter-country learning and up scaling of good practices.
- d) Collaborate closely with the UNICEF, UNESCO and other multisectoral partnerships including the Global Education Coalition to provide appropriate support to AU Member States to implement the education Response to COVID-19.
- e) Plan for re-opening schools with appropriate strategies to catch-up on the lost period of learning with time periods for catching-up on work identified, implement back to school campaigns and measures to curb further infections in educational institutions, schools, universities and colleges. To this end, Ministries of Education should work closely with ministries of finance to safeguard the education sector funding including establishing a Contingency Fund for Education in emergencies.
- f) Underlined the need to embrace and promote the creation and use of freely available and accessible Open Sources platform for learning, course and teaching materials, research, publications and information pertaining to the curriculum at school and university level in the continent;
- g) Urged Member States to take advantage of the opportunity for online teaching and learning to ensure continuity of education on the continent, improvement of education systems and robust e-learning infrastructure, ensuring quality and integrating lessons learnt and good practices from COVID-19 response as espoused by the DOTSS approach, and conceiving a model roadmap for post COVID-19 which integrates continuity of education in the different regional and national responses.
- h) Implored Member States to consider establishing accelerators for innovation in support of remote learning which is different from online learning. Other ways of facilitating access to learning material also need to be explored particularly for learners, students and vulnerable groups that may not have access to material provided online. Governments need to take steps in making municipal buildings

and public libraries available for learners that may not have access to online connectivity and remote learning.

- i) Africa to harmonize and adapt school calendars and speak with one voice on assessment and the organization of state examinations to give credence to student degrees; call for a joint African response to address the examination during the on-going school year which is affected by the pandemic and decide jointly on the cancellation or postponement of the school year.
- j) Call for the creation of a network of online and distance learning institutions in the continent.
- k) Called upon the public and private actors, technical and financial partners, development partners, civil society, elected officials and local communities to support and accompany the educational continuity policies implemented in the various countries to maximise impact and ownership and take into account the concerns of private schools.

2. **RECOMMEND** a concerted STI Policy and R&D Response to COVID-19 building on African national and regional organisations and networks such as the African Academy of Sciences and national academies of science, and science granting councils, the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, the AU-AUDA STI Flagship Programmes, and specifically the African Medicines Regulatory Harmonization (AMRH) Initiative, and the networks of centres established by the Africa CDC, and the African Scientific Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC) underpinned by the following measures:

- a) Establish R&D platforms at national, regional and continental levels for:
  - Sharing best practices, information, mutual learning, and upscaling initiative with a regional dimension, and minimising duplication of efforts on COVID-19;
  - Conducting and documenting scientific priority setting including R&D activities, identifying gaps and promoting networking, coordination and intra-Africa collaboration on COVID-19 R&D and future outbreaks
  - Establishing, strengthening and supporting networks of Biosafety and bio-security laboratories in the continent, and
  - Promoting human and institutional capacity building; and
  - Evaluating and promoting treatment protocols and other experiences by African researchers in line with the demographic and climatic realities of the continent;
- b) Establish a Strategic African Research and Innovation Emergency Response on epidemiology of COVID-19, therapies, vaccines and technologies; identification

and testing the efficacy of existing and potential drugs and vaccines for clinical trials, and novel treatment combinations including traditional medicine and practices on COVID-19 as well as population behavioural studies. Furthermore, promote global co-creation through programmes such as the European Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnerships (EDCTP) and generation of knowledge by African researchers, with a long-term view on future outbreaks;

- c) Streamlining the Africa's strategic research and innovation response on the epidemiology of COVID-19 to focus on (i) Scientific Understanding of Corona Virus and COVID19; (ii) Pharmaceutical and Biopharmaceutical Engineering; (iii) Biomedical Engineering; (iv) Clinical Understanding of Corona Viruses and COVID19 and (v) Formulation of National Health Strategies in Member States on COVID-19 and other epidemics;
- d) Invest in data science capacity for modelling and analysis and promote data collection, access and sharing of COVID-19 research and development through Open Science principles to bridge the science, technology, and innovation inequalities in Africa's R&D landscape as per the STC-EST 3 decision of December 2019, and Call on UNESCO, WHO, UNFPA and other UN agencies as well as initiatives such as the African Open Science Platform to advance Open Science in the continent as a game changer; and boost intra-Africa research collaboration, including South-South, and North-South;
- e) Put in place a mechanism to access funding for research and development for COVID-19 and other disease outbreaks from continental and international funds established to mitigate and fight pandemics. In line with the Executive Council Decision of 13 April 2020, the continental fund should fight the socio, economic and humanitarian challenges arising from Covid-19, and be used to further boost the capacity of the Africa CDC and also support research and development capacity especially for multi-disciplinarian work involving the social sciences. Further invite the international development partners, the Private Sector, Direct Foreign Investments, Public Sector and contributions from philanthropic organisations and individuals to resource R&D for COVID-19 and future outbreaks;
- f) Strengthen research ethics reviews and timely regulatory approvals as part of health systems strengthening to enhance Africa's capability to use new therapies, vaccines and technologies for public health pandemics and neglected tropical diseases affecting the continent;
- g) Develop and strengthen regulatory framework to support innovation and the commercialization of biotechnology products;



- h) The rapid improvement and development of productive capacity in Africa for supportive medical, supplies and personal protective equipment (PPEs) on a commercial scale, including ventilators, masks and gloves to support frontline workers in the fight against COVID-19. In the process promote the development of African technologies and solutions to respond to the crisis and minimise over-dependence on countries outside Africa;
  - i) Leverage the critical role that space science, technology and innovation especially Earth Observation Systems and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to monitor disease outbreaks and encourage national, regional and continental actors to deepen Earth Observation cooperation within the framework of the African Space Policy and Strategy to support governments' interventions in combating the COVID-19 pandemic as well as sharing technology solutions, Earth Observations data, spatial information and lessons learnt, including tools to support evidence-based decision making to mitigate pandemics;
  - j) The Commission in close Collaboration with the RECS to translate the STI policy response into a coordinated program at all levels in a form of roadmap with clear timelines and role of all relevant continental and national actors and partners including AAS, WHO, Networks of AUDA, ASRIC and Africa CDC, UNESCO's Networks- Category I and II Centers and Chairs in Microbiology and Life Sciences, with the view of building and exploiting synergies for a continental inclusive STI Response to COVID-19;
3. **URGE** the Commission, Regional Economic Communities and Member States with the support of Development Partners to carry out socio-economic and environmental impact evaluations and assessments and also develop response strategies for COVID-19 and Ebola Outbreaks;
  4. **URGE** Member States to provide adequate data-communication network infrastructure backbone, for Research and Education connectivity in Africa to support zero-rated digital platforms for zero-rated online learning and research; including exploring, with telecommunication providers, the possibility of zero-rating of apps and content dedicated for education. Member states are also urged to make use of existing media infrastructure such as television and radio, which may have a wider reach than online learning platforms, in order to ensure that learning continues;
  5. **APPRECIATE** the technical and financial support from Development Partners, and **CALL UPON** them to continue working to support the efforts of the AU Commission, Member States and Regional Economic Communities in

contextualising the Education, Science, Technology and Innovation response to COVID-19, and future epidemics to the needs of Member States;

6. **CALL UPON** on a broader scale, the UN Agencies and all partners to work closely with AUC, RECs and member states to strengthen national and regional STI systems in Africa to build robust ecosystems for research and innovation, evidenced based policy making for sustainable development as a long-term response and preparedness to current pandemic and future environmental threats;
7. **UNDERScore** the importance of prioritising funding for education across Africa, and deliberate investment in research and innovation. **RECALLED** the on-going efforts to establish and operationalize an African Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Fund (ESTIF) and **REQUEST** the Commission, the African Development Bank to take appropriate action to expedite the process;
8. **ACKNOWLEDGE** the virtual meetings as platform for information exchange, sharing experiences and best practices and **AGREE** to convene non-binding informal Webinars involving the participation of the Development Partners once every month or until the pandemic is over; and
9. **EXPRESS** profound appreciation to the Commission for timely organisation of this virtual STC-EST 3 meeting to galvanize and harmonize continental efforts towards a comprehensive response to COVID-19 through Education, Science, and Technology.

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