

AFRICAN UNION

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First Conference of the African Scientific,
Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC),
27-29 November, 2018, Abuja, Nigeria

CONCEPT NOTE

I. Background

1. The role of science, technology and innovation, as enablers and tools for spurring socio-economic development cannot be over emphasised. Africa, needs a stronger, more dynamic and sustainable research enterprise that is important to its economy and the society. An inclusive research enterprise that mobilizes different segments of the economy and society: academia, research, industry, funding institutions, public and private sectors to work together on Africa's long-term aspirations articulated in Agenda 2063 "The Africa We Want" which fosters inclusive growth and sustainable development, as well as the 2030 Agenda which promotes economic, social and environmental dimensions in a balanced and integrated manner.
2. We are aware that although our countries have collective goals and shared needs, they are at different development levels, with differentiated capacities -financial, human capital, scientific and technological. Most of these countries are disproportionately affected by well-known development challenges that are multifaceted, interlinked and transcend national boundaries; some of these challenges cannot be addressed by governments single handedly. For example, poverty and inequalities; diseases; adverse impact of climate change; food and nutrition security, digital infrastructures, health and disease outbreaks, trade and the environment. They require a functional system that is built on strong transnational collaborative approaches that utilize our diversity, range of existing capacities, and expertise, while leveraging international cooperation.
3. There has been a growing need for the continent to mobilise its excellence in science, technology and innovation and provide a sustainable space that promotes dialogue and a voice to the scientific community in shaping the discourse of a continental research and policy nexus, and be involve in the science, technology and innovation programmes to address Africa's development challenges. At the continental level the AU policy organs have adopted decisions¹ inviting the continent to create a Research and Innovation Council as the institutional setting to promote the implementation of Africa's Science, Technology and Innovation agenda, and generation of knowledge. The African Union Commission undertook an inclusive feasibility study for the creation of an African Research Council, through rigorous consultations with Research Councils in Africa, researchers, policy makers and other relevant stakeholders. Just recently in 2017, African scientists and researchers issued the Abidjan Call which laments the current surge in the contribution of science and technology to the improvement of human welfare, and observes that the African continent still suffers from many shortcomings and weaknesses in scientific and technological research despite African researchers' intellectual capital and that such insufficiency is due to: inadequate or non-existent funding for research activities; a low impact of scientific production on public policies; a misperception of the contribution of science and technology to the development of Africa.

¹ Decision Ex.CL/Dec.747 (XXII) and Decision Ex/CL/Dec.216 (VII) adopted by the Executive Council

II. Rationale

4. Convinced of the eminent role that the African Scientific, Research and Innovation Council (ASRIC), would play in the research and innovation efforts of the continent, and as a direct implementation of Decisions of the AU policy organs, the Commission will convene from 27 – 29 the inaugural Congress of ASRIC and in the process establish its governance², which consists of a Congress a Bureau; a Scientific Committee; and a Secretariat.
5. The establishment of ASRIC will allow African scientists to be directly involved in research policy and programming process. This will expand and widen the spread of research in all sectors of development and knowledge generation. ASRIC will not only bring together the scientific community, but the funding agencies, the private sector, Civil Society, Entrepreneurs, business leaders and other stakeholders. It will be instrumental in the implementation of various AU development policies such as the Science Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024), Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Plan for Africa (PMPA) and Accelerated Industrial Development in Africa (AIDA), that underpin science, research, technology and innovation. These continental development plans are part of the long-term, people-cantered Agenda 2063 which fosters among other things, social transformation and economic competitiveness, through human capital development, innovation, value addition, industrialisation and entrepreneurship.

III. OBJECTIVES

6. The principal objective of the 1st Congress is launch ASRIC and specifically,
 - (i) Establish the governance of ASRIC including:
 - Election of Bureau of ASRIC
 - Organization of sub-scientific committee
 - (ii) To hold a Continental gathering of scientists, academics, inventors, donors and innovators in order to promote consultation/Dialogue among all the stakeholders:
 - (iii) Promote and increase awareness of the mandate of ASRIC.
 - (iv) Recognize STI as a development and integration engine in Africa;
 - (v) Create continental and regional networks of researches and innovators
 - (vi) Link African Scientists in the Diaspora to Africa and to encourage them to take part in Africa's socioeconomic development
 - (vii) Engage African policy makers and industry leaders of the essential role of STI in development programmes;

² ASRIC Statute 2016

IV. EXPECTED OUTCOMES

7. The expected outcomes of the congress are:

- (a) Organization of ASRIC
 - Establishment of the bureau of ASRIC
 - Organization of scientific sub-committees
- (b) Policy makers are invited to strengthen their political commitment in favour of STI in all its dimensions.
- (c) African States are invited to draft their STI national strategy and/or plan in line with STISA-2024.
- (d) Assurance and strengthening of the link between research centres and universities (public and private) on the one hand and on the other between this pair and productive sectors.
- (e) Creation of continental and regional networks of researchers and innovators
- (f) Drafting of continental mobilizing projects by sub-committees in line with the six priorities of STISA-2024.
- (g) Advancing the understanding of ASRIC as an institutional platform which will support knowledge production across various fields of science for Africa's socio-economic development.

V. PARTICIPATION

8. About 300 hundred participants are expected to take part in this meeting. Expected participants are from the following:

- National Research Councils or other similar Institutions nominated by Member States;
- Regional Economic Communities;
- Scientific Committee;
- African STI Institutions including the African Academy of Sciences;
- Financial institutions
- Laureates of the African Union Kwame Nkrumah Scientific Awards of the three years prior to the year of election (6) ;
- Representatives of the African Diaspora;
- Representatives of the African STI Civil society;
- Representatives of Industry, (Public and Private Sectors);
- International STI Institutions.
- Etc

VI. AGENDA

9. The conference will be organized into plenary sessions for the opening, setting the context, highlights on the objectives and election and operationalisation of the ASRIC governance. There will be a number of technical sessions dedicated to the sustainable operationalisation of the entire ASRIC and finally a concluding session that will mark official launching of ASRIC: The provisional agenda is as follows:

- **Session 1:** **Opening:** Welcome address and opening remarks
- **Session 2:** **Setting the Scene:** context and presentation of the objectives and expectations, provision of general Information, and the adoption of the Rules of Procedure.
- **Session 3:** **Election of the Bureau:** This is a closed session to institute the ASRIC Congress and elect the ASRIC Bureau from the national research councils or similar entities, setting up of sub-committees etc.
- **Session 4:** **Breakaway Session:** Parallel Working Groups on programmatic content of the committees (scientific and innovation; Communication and Resource Mobilization committees)
- **Session 5:** **Scientific Research and Innovation in Africa in support of ASRIC –** Case of AU research grant programme
- **Session 6:** **Breakaway Session:** Parallel Working Groups on operational details of the Committees to discuss criteria for nominating the committee members, number of members, funding and interactions of the sub-committee, etc).
- **Session 7:** **Partnerships for ASRIC Implementation**
- **Session 8:** **Official Launching of ASRIC**
- **Closure**

VII. DATE & VENUE

10. The conference is scheduled to hold in **Sheraton Hotel** Abuja, Nigeria from 27 to 29 November 2018.