



**EUROPEAN  
COMMISSION**

**AFRICAN UNION  
COMMISSION**



## **JOINT STATEMENT**

### **ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU-AU PARTNERSHIP FOR SCIENCE, INFORMATION SOCIETY AND SPACE.**

The European Commission (EC) and the African Union Commission (AUC) have made substantial progress towards the definition of a broad range of projects with a strong capacity building component. These respond to the priorities identified in the Africa-EU Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space. These projects will help bridge both scientific and digital divides, strengthening Africa's base in the areas of Science and technology and enhancing the use of ICTs and space applications as enablers for growth and socio-economic development.

AU Commissioner Jean Pierre Onvehoun Ezin and EU Commissioners Janez Potočnik, Viviane Reding, Günter Verheugen and Louis Michel ("the Commissioners") agree to consider this book of 19 "lighthouse projects" as the framework for the implementation of the EU-AU Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space and its Action Plan. These projects will be further refined and prioritized through the involvement of the Member States and all relevant players on both sides, with a view to identify the most appropriate and viable implementation modalities and possible sources of funding.

Among the 19 "lighthouse" projects, the following ones are ready for early implementation:

#### **2 projects under the science priority:**

- **African Research Grants & Scientific Awards**

The general objective of this project is to set up a research programme to promote sustainable science and technology research for Africa's technical, economic and social development; and to help the AUC Department of Human Resources, Science Technology acquire the capability to co-ordinate the implementation of that programme.

- **Water and Food Security in Africa**

This project aims to strengthen Africa's capacity in science and technology in order to cope with food security problems while promoting sustainable management of land and water resources. In this context, research and demonstration activities in one or more African river basins will consolidate the relevant knowledge and assure its concrete impact.

## 2 projects under the information society priority

- **Africa Connect**

The AfricaConnect project will support the development of regional research and education networks in Sub-Saharan Africa and their interconnection with the European GEANT2 network, building on a similar initiative, EumedConnect, implemented in North-Africa (currently interconnecting around 1,5 Million users across more than 500 research organisations). The objective will be to contribute integrating the African research community both at regional and international levels, through interconnection with the most cost-effective high bandwidth capacity.

- **The African Internet Exchange System (AXIS)**

This project aims to support the establishment of a continental African internet infrastructure through national and regional internet exchange points. Such deployment is considered crucial for the development of the internet in Africa, generating huge costs savings by keeping local traffic local and offering better quality of service and new applications opportunities. AXIS activities will include technical assistance on planning, regulatory/policy issues, as well as human training to achieve this objective.

## 2 projects under the space priority:

- **The African Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (Kopernicus -Africa)**

Kopernicus - Africa will reinforce Africa's use of and contribution to remote sensing science, especially building operational services for sustainable development. The "Kopernicus Africa Action Plan" detailing infrastructure needs, thematic priorities and financial instruments will be submitted to the third EU-Africa Summit, foreseen early 2010 in Libya.

- **Capacity Building in the AUC on Geospatial Sciences**

The EC Joint Research Centre's Africa Observatory exploits geospatial science for sustainable development focusing on natural resources, food security, crisis management and renewable energies. Capacity building will identify modalities for implementing a mirror of the Observatory at AUC so as to increase the use of scientific information for decision-making.

The Commissioners agree on the following basic and general principles for the implementation of the 8<sup>th</sup> Partnership Action Plan:

- the need to apply scientific knowledge and engineering know-how to economic growth, social progress and sound policy decisions;
- the need to combine a thematic approach, based on encouraging centres of excellence, such as Pan-African universities, with broader capacity-building;
- the need to use centres or poles of excellence to create high aspirations amongst African researchers and engineers, and to inspire and support students;
- the need to develop an inclusive Information Society extending reach and cutting-down access costs of ICTs and related services through support in the fields of e-policies and regulation;
- the need to generate some short term results, but within a coherent and coordinated long term vision and strategy;
- the need to invest in the development of appropriate and sustainable new technologies;
- the need to involve the Diaspora;
- the need to involve the respective Member States, and the Regional Economic Communities of Africa, and to federate all key stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society in order to avoid fragmentation of initiatives;
- the need to support the other thematic partnerships of the Africa-EU Strategic Partnership through the effective application of scientific and engineering knowledge;
- the need to popularise science through awards and training of journalist in science.

The Commissioners share the strong conviction that research, innovation and the development of the information society are vital instruments for attaining equitable and sustained economic growth, alleviating poverty, eradicating disease and bridging the digital divide. They are essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The respective experiences of the Commissioners confirm the invaluable role played by science and the information society as enablers for deepened regional cooperation and integration, as well as for fostering improved understanding between nations on issues of global concern. They therefore strongly emphasize the central role of the Partnership on Science, Information Society and Space in the implementation of the wider Africa – EU Strategic Partnership.

The Commissioners also agree to further reinforce EC/AUC cooperation in Science and Technology. The European Framework Programme for Research and Development (FP7) is a primary tool to pursue that objective. Under FP7 (2007-2013) various collaborative schemes – some of them specifically focused on Euro-African cooperation - will be used identify priorities, to promote the access of African scientists to projects and networks, to bring together the best researchers from both sides, and ultimately to produce results that are both of high scientific value and great economic and social impact. As an outcome of these efforts, research cooperation between Africa and Europe is expected to become more substantial, more focused and more relevant.

As the availability of appropriate funding instruments will be imperative to achieve the goals of the Partnership, the Commissioners encourage new, specific and sustained investments from national and regional, public and private, funding sources by all partners concerned with the objectives of the Partnership. In this regard, they consider the prioritisation of science and the information society, as priority objectives for Africa – EU development cooperation instruments, as especially important.

Whilst capacity-building remains paramount, the excellence, expertise and experience of Africa's knowledge and innovation communities provides a valuable contribution to international science and technology endeavours and in addressing shared global challenges. The Commissioners therefore call for increased efforts as part of the Partnership to promote and facilitate improved research cooperation between African and European partners.

An enabling policy environment will be essential for the effective implementation of the Partnership, therefore the Commissioners call for an enhanced Africa – EU science and information society policy dialogue, to permit mutual policy learning as well as, where appropriate, policy coordination and alignment.

Brussels, 1st October 2008

Dr. Janez Potočnik  
European Commissioner  
Science and Research

H.E. Dr. Jean Pierre Onvehoun Ezin  
African Union Commissioner  
Human Resources, Science and Technology