

Speaking Notes for the Launch of the Science, Technology and Innovation Month 4 August 2014 by Ministry of Infrastructure, Science & Technology, Botswana

Programme Director

Hon Minister Nonfo Molefhi

Permanent Secretary, Mr Dikagiso Mokotedi

Deputy Permanent Secretary, Dr Keoagile Molapong

Director, Ms Lesego Motoma

Ambassadors

Head of Missions

Diplomatic Corp

Heads of Science Agencies and Councils

Business Leaders

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

All Protocol Observed

On behalf of the Executive Secretary firstly let me thank the Government of Botswana and the Ministry of Infrastructure Science and Technology for extending an invitation to the SADC Secretariat to participate in this important and historic event, the launch of the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Month. Botswana has now joined the list of many Member States in the region and continent who are celebrating their STI Weeks/Months annually. The STI Month is also being launched in a Month where Botswana will assume the Chair of SADC.

Africa is faced by many challenges including economic and social challenges, thus making science, technology and innovation key to addressing these challenges. Many African countries appropriate less than 1% of GDP for research and development. In 2007, the AU Heads of State and Government called for all Member States to allocate at least 1% of GDP to support research and development by 2010. But to date Member States have not reached this target. The SADC Heads of State approved the SADC Protocol on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in 2008. The overall objective of the SADC Protocol on STI is to foster co-operation and promote, the development, transfer and mastery of science, technology and innovation in Member States. A number of STI projects and initiatives are being championed in the region such as STI policy training; women in science, engineering and technology; high

performance computing; research and innovation management capacities; STI response to climate change and IKS just to mention a few.

The population in the SADC region is estimated at 280.961 million (2011), DRC having the largest population of 75 million (2011), (reference SADC Statistics Unit). It is important that we take advantage of our human resource as a region and develop our STI capacities to support sustainable development, economic development and growth to foster regional integration. The SADC Treaty of 1992 also recognises the importance of STI by stating that we need to "Promote the development, transfer and mastery of technology" The region recently reviewed the implementation of the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan (RISDP) and has developed new priorities with a focus on industrialization and market integration as a key driver for regional integration. At a continental level the African Union (AU) is championing the development of Agenda 2063 to set out the vision, agenda and priorities for the next 50 years. In response to the Agenda 2063, the AU has developed the African Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024).

The region is championing and implementing key policies and strategies such as the, Revised RISDP 2015-2020; SADC Industrialisation and Market Integration Strategy and Roadmap; and Regional Infrastructure Development Master Plan (2013-2027). In September 2015 the UN General Assembly will be considering the Post 2015 Developmental Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals which will have 17 Goals, of which Goal 9 – being on "Building resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation".

Botswana is making good strides in developing its national system of innovation, with the review of the STI Policy of 1998 and the adoption of the revised Policy in 2012, which has led to the restructuring of the system of innovation and its institutional architecture leading to the establishment of key institutions such as Botswana Institute for Technology Research and Innovation (BITRI) and Botswana Innovation Hub (BIH) to drive research, development and innovation. We would also like to commend Botswana for launching its National Survey on Research and Development Report in 2014, in an effort to measure STI capacities and investments to inform policy implementation. Botswana being one of the host countries for the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) remote stations this will also boost the development of STI capacities and infrastructure in the country.

In 2008 the SADC Ministers responsible for Science, Technology and Innovation

directed the SADC Secretariat to develop a plan to launch the SADC STI Week in an effort to promote STI development in the region. In 2009 the SADC STI Week was launched in Mauritius of which Botswana was in attendance. A number of recommendations were made at the launch of the SADC STI Week such as:

- Enhancing Public Understanding of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM);
- Creating an Enabling Policy Framework;
- Developing Youth into Science Strategies;
- Increasing GDP expenditure for R&D;
- Promoting ICT as an Engine Economic Growth;
- Protection Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and Intellectual Property (IP); and
- Developing Human Resources in Science, Engineering and Technology (SET)

The Ministers also recommended that youth into science strategies should also include children in order to promote the teaching and learning of science, technology and innovation subjects from primary to tertiary education. In addition, the curriculum of teacher education programmes should include science, technology and innovation.

It is important for Member States to develop Science Communication Strategies to enhance the application of STI to contribute to sustainable development and economic growth. We also need to capacitate various stakeholders such as a journalist to report on STI developments at national, regional, continental and global level. Quiet often we find that stories related STI find themselves at the back pages of newspapers. I am happy to say that STI communication and advocacy is one of the priority programmes to be implemented by the region under the Revised RISDP (2015-2020). These programmes will include science communication, advocacy, training and the promotion of the establishment of science centres and hubs at community level especial in rural areas where communities are not able to access the necessary infrastructure such as laboratories and research equipment.

We need to continue to develop programmes to engage our communities and the youth on the importance of STI and its application to daily livelihoods, by demystifying applications such as nanotechnology; biotechnology; laser sciences; and space sciences etc. I was pleased to follow

in the local media the competition which is being championed by BITRI, challenging the public to come up with a Setswana name for nanotechnology, more of such initiatives should be implemented. As policy makers we need to continue to make the strong link and relevance of STI to economic development and growth, poverty alleviation and job creation which are key priorities of many governments. The STI Month and its activities should be used as a platform to promote this and to foster science engagement with local communities especially the youth.

We wish you success in the implementation of the various activities planned for the month and once more congratulate the Government of Botswana for launching its STI Month and also for assuming the Chair of SADC in the coming weeks.

I thank you

Anneline Morgan, (Senior Technical Advisor: Science, Technology and Innovation, SADC Secretariat