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**Presentation of reports on science, technology and innovation policy reviews**

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# **REPORT ON SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AN INNOVATION POLICY REVIEW, UGANDA 2017 – 2021 BY MR. DAVID O.O OBONG, PERMANENT SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

**1.1** Uganda recognizes the vital role of Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) in driving her vision of a “*Transformed Society from a Peasant to a Modern and Prosperous Country within 30 years*”. Promoting ST&I is undisputedly a fundamental policy decision that must be deliberately pursued through ‘a whole of government approach’ by stakeholders. The policy enables us to streamline our course of actions, guide our partners and support efficacy in service delivery to the people we serve. This in the end facilitates us to deliver with professionalism, transparency, inclusiveness (leaving no one behind) and innovativeness in the ST&I ecosystem.

**1.2** The Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (STIP) review of Uganda which commenced in 2017 was prepared by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on the request of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. Prior to this, there was in place the National Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Policy, 2009.

The National ST&I Policy of 2009 was developed to support the sector in achieving its mandate. Since 2009, fundamental changes in ST&I have disrupted global and local industries, value chains and markets, leaving no single country untouched. The continuous quest for new technologies and innovations arising out of emerging science remains in motion and has to be embraced going forward. Through

UNCTAD, the Ministry therefore took a decision to review the 2009 policy with the view of keeping it relevant and more so in matching the SDGs aspirations. Amidst this, the COVID19 pandemic presents yet another perspective on new norms of life which should be factored in the ST&I interventions. Above all, the establishment of the Ministry in 2016 with an overall mandate to oversee the national innovation system needs to be adequately and quickly proclaimed through an operation policy tool in the ST&I Ecosystem. All these necessitated a review of the 2009 policy which we are grateful was successfully executed.

**1.3** In order to have a well-coordinated and functional National STI System for Uganda Government, the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation was established in June 2016 to provide policy guidance and coordination on matters of Scientific Research, Development and the entire National Innovation System in the Country. One of the immediate task of the new Ministry was to review the country's STI Policy in the context of both global and national developments where a lot of focus has been placed on STI for overcoming development challenges including the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

**1.4** At the start of the STIP review engagements between UNCTAD and MoSTI skeleton staff, the task at hand appeared daunting and insurmountable. We were however strongly inspired by two critical factors namely the wise statement by the renowned African leader, the late Nelson Mandela in facing a challenging task. He stated that ***"It always seems impossible until its done"*** and also by the UNCTAD inspirational team working hand in hand with the MoSTI team.

**1.5** I therefore would like to extend Ugandans appreciation to UNCTAD especially Ms. Shamika N. Sirimanne, Director, Division on Technology and Logistics, Mr. Angel Gonzalez Sanz, Chief, Science, Technology and ICT Branch, Mr. Dimo Calovski and the team he worked with for the timely intervention and continued relentless support to help us review Uganda's STI Policy. On the same note, I also thank the Hon. Minister, Dr. Elioda Tumwesigye and the Ministry's technical team for the support rendered to UNCTAD for making this possible.

## **2.0 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION**

During the process of reviewing the ST&I Policy, one aspect of emphasis was to have an intense stakeholder's consultation in line with the SDG principles of leaving no one behind. Stakeholder groups consulted included Private Sector, Academia, Ministries, Departments and Agencies, Local Governments, Civil Society Organisations and Development Partners. The views expressed by the stakeholders are as in Annex I.

## **3.0 EMERGING ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE STI POLICY**

**3.1** Identified emerging issues to be addressed by policy include inter-alia the following:-

- (i) The Policy will be implemented under Uganda's Innovation System which comprises of Government, Academia and Research Institutions, Private Sector and Society, using the whole Government approach of leaving no one behind.
- (ii) The Policy puts emphasis on integration of the following frontier/4IR technologies among others to diversify and sustain the economy:- bio-technology, digital technology, block

chain, artificial intelligence, robotics, drones, data science, nano-technology, material science, space science.

- (iii) The Policy will promote technopreneurship and commercialization of innovations in the country. MoSTI leadership to engage Cabinet and key actors to prioritise and allocate more resources for commercialization of innovations.
- (iv) ST&I Policy will promote gender equality and inclusiveness for enhancing participation of women, girls, people with disabilities and youths among others. Mainstreaming and bridging the gender gap is vital for social transformation.
- (v) ST&I Policy will ensure integration of social sciences and humanities in all aspects of ST&I.
- (vi) The revised Policy will address digitalization for transformation as digital technology ecosystem holds a yuge potential for transforming the country.

The above issues which were identified informed the comprehensive stakeholder consultation which was carried out in the ST&I Ecosystem.

#### **4.0 LESSONS LEARNT DURING THE ST&I POLICY REVIEW**

- (i) The National system of innovation (NSI) requires reorganization and subsequent capacity building with a lens of whole of government approach. This should further be aligned to the new National Development Program (III) framework.
- (ii) The need to mobilize resources to finance the policy/R&D is not only a lesson but a task ahead. The involvement of the private sector and partners in enhancing the national innovation fund basket is therefore both a key and urgent decision.
- (iii) More efforts are needed in securing necessary ST&I infrastructures to support technology transfers, adoption and

adaptation. The Infrastructures range from Science parks, Technology and Business Incubators, modern laboratories among others.

- (iv) Mindset change, attitudes of the population towards an innovative and creative society requires stakeholders' attention if we are to embrace ST&I effectively.

## **5.0 STRATEGIC ACTION AREAS**

As a follow on to the successful policy review, the following are the key actionable areas to be undertaken:-

- (i) Engagement of the Permanent Secretaries for their input in the draft policy documents before submission to Cabinet.
- (ii) Cabinet approval of the policy for implementation.
- (iii) Innovative approaches to the policy implementation. In the context of the diversity in Uganda's population and complex aspects of the policy it's likely that the policy may not be easily grasped, let alone understood by all segments of the population. Our emerging thoughts on the way forward in supporting the policy implementation include the following:-
  - ❖ Coming with publication on ST&I Policy in Uganda – the policy and its implication;
  - ❖ Publishing a popular version of the policy;
  - ❖ Translation of the policy into key local languages
  - ❖ Intense outreach (broader social mobilization) and awareness creation for the entire population basing on the SDG principle of leaving on one behind and MoSTIs interest of ensuring that we all walk together and in the same direction in the policy implementation;
  - ❖ From the Policy, develop other regulatory tools to address specific issues in the ST&I;

- ❖ Strengthen the integration of the ST&I in development processes by all Ministries, Departments, Agencies and Local governments; and
- ❖ Funding for identified activities under the implementation arrangement. This is one example of walking the talk in ensuring that ST&I is reviewed and fully supported as an enabling tool for social economic transformation in the country.