

Statement by the Secretary General at the General Assembly of the World Association of Industrial and Technological Research Organisation (WAITRO), 16 September 2014, Copenhagen

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Mr. Martin Lidegaard, Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark,

Your Excellences; Distinguished Participants; Ladies and Gentlemen

Allow me first to thank the organisers, for inviting me in my capacity as the Secretary-General of the ACP Group of States, to participate in the WAITRO General Assembly and its 22nd Biennial Congress.

The ACP Group recognises the importance of investing in the knowledge economy in its Member States, as it continues to support programmes in education, science and technology and research, particularly through the development cooperation strategies of the ACP-EU Cotonou Partnership Agreement.

It should be noted that ACP Countries mostly have access to knowledge either through national expertise or through their bilateral and multilateral development cooperation programmes. The real difficulty, though, in most of the ACP countries, is in translating knowledge from research into relevant quality programmes of application.

Mechanisms, therefore, need to be designed where a wider and better application of existing knowledge, particularly, from development partners is adopted. It is thus paramount to promote research programmes in ACP countries which attempt to cover both approaches, that is, knowledge generation and transfer and application of existing knowledge. This indeed can be exploited from international cooperation programmes, such as Horizon 2020, as well as from the development cooperation programmes executed through the Cotonou Partnership Agreement.

Increased international collaboration in research is expected to contribute to the solving of mutual societal and developmental questions. However, the research carried out in these partnership might at times not be aligned with national and regional priorities of the partner countries involved. This may not necessarily mean that the designed partnership research priorities are at odds with international research interests. It should be noted that there are many developmental questions which are best answered through comparative analysis, using a common framework and drawing on experiences, evaluations, experiments, in different countries. In this regard, the fostering of existing regional and international research networks, and the development and support of new ones, are part of the effective leveraging of world-wide research production to resolve research questions for public good.

Your Excellences,

Distinguished Participants,

The objectives of the ACP-EU Science and Technology Cooperation Programme are to address the scientific and technological divide between ACP member states and the most industrialised countries, as well as to strengthen science, technology and innovation (STI) in ACP countries. This will enable generation, update and use of scientific knowledge and to enhance the use of science, technology and innovation as a key enabler for poverty reduction, growth and socio-economic development. The Programme is convinced that one of the requirements for an effective fight against poverty in the ACP countries is the application of knowledge gained from science and technology in order to promote innovation and ultimately develop appropriate technologies, which could be effectively deployed within the context of local needs and resources.

In this regard, the second phase of this Programme focuses on two priority thematic areas: a) Energy access and efficiency and b) Agriculture and food security. 21 projects are currently under implementation representing the participation of 80 institutions from 31 ACP countries, as well as 26 institutions from 9 EU Member States, USA and India.

Although it is not a development cooperation Programme, Horizon 2020, addresses the coupling of research with innovation, focusses on societal challenges and is open to a wide participation in the EU and beyond. Societal challenges such as health, food security, energy efficiency, and climate change/environment, identified in the Horizon 2020 Programme, are also some of the thematic areas the ACP-EU Science and Technology Programme has focussed on during its implementation, in supporting relevant capacity building actions in ACP countries.

Further, it should also be commended that the Horizon 2020 Programme is open to the participation of researchers from

anywhere in the world, which facilitates the tackling of challenges that affect us all.

As I conclude, let me point out that the use of pilot and capacity building projects, such as those in the ACP-EU Science and Technology Programme, is effective in demonstrating innovation and research outputs with commercial value, as well as new developed programmes for capacity building in various sectors. However, given the high cost of research and development, ACP governments need to be innovative in their support for science, technology and innovation by providing the necessary incentives that will enable the sustainability and development of research outputs from such international cooperation projects and programmes.

I thank you for your kind attention.

H.E Muhammad Alhaji Mumuni

ACP Secretary General

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