



MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY,
HON. MODESTUS AMUTSE ON THE OCCASION OF THE HEI INNOVATION SUMMIT.**

WEDNESDAY, 05 JUNE 2024

NAIROBI, KENYA

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Nigeria**

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Mr. Olaf Seidel, Head of Projects, Make-IT in Africa/GIZ

Director of Ceremonies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my distinct honour to stand before you here today to deliver my speech at this very important platform. This is a platform that, in my personal view, presents an opportunity to remind us the importance of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) towards innovation and ultimately national development. Indeed, at this point in time wherein all our efforts are geared to lifting our socio-economic conditions, the nexus between HEI and innovation cannot be understated.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Innovation is considered as one of the key drivers of the economy, and has now become a major component of growth for economies globally. Various studies had revealed the critical role of innovation in various aspects of the economy, such as global competitiveness, financial systems, quality of life, infrastructure development, employment, trade, just to mention a few. Consequently, many governments have put innovation at the centre of their growth strategies.

May I remind you that our lives are subjected to continuous changes and evolving phenomena's. And, due to changes in our life circumstances, we are driven to devise new ways to overcome challenges and enhance efficiency.

Examples of these changes are changing demographics and markets, introductions of new knowledge or information, natural or man-made threats (e.g. climate change, war, disease, etc.), changes in regulations (e.g. new technical standards and requirements) or the social or economic conditions (e.g. increasing lifespan coupled with increased number of old-age illnesses), just to name a few.

New knowledge enhances innovation opportunities. Research and development plays a critical role in the innovation process. R&D really is that important – in fact it is merely wheels that drives innovation. Knowledge plays a central role to in creation of new products and services, and equally helps us address natural, social and environmental challenges. It is therefore of outmost importance that our governments adequately invest resources towards the production of knowledge and adopts appropriate policies and strategies to support R&D.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The main purpose of HEI is the production of knowledge. Knowledge is produced by conducting research. Successful nations with strong economies have realised their successes by investing in higher education.

Universities are considered as relevant and distinctive actors to the innovative potential of societies. This holds particularly for basic research, which universities and public research institutes are responsible for producing science-based knowledge upon which the development of new products, processes and services can be build.

Ladies and gentlemen,

National governments, bears the responsibility of establishing, promoting and sustaining a dynamic National System of Innovation (NSI). However, this is only realisable through well-crafted Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) policies and strategies.

Allow me to remind you that innovation is not a linear process, and that it is the result of interactions between governments, academia and business industries and diverse public policies. The degree of interactions amongst these institutions determines a country's innovative capacity.

As such, our governments are responsible for fostering and supporting innovation in several ways, few amongst them are:

i) Policy Development

Governments can create policies and regulatory frameworks that encourage innovation by providing incentives, funding research and development (R&D), protecting intellectual property rights, and removing barriers to entry for entrepreneurs and innovators.

ii) Investment in Research and Development (R&D)

Governments often invest in R&D initiatives across various sectors, including science, technology, healthcare, energy, and education, to support the development of new technologies, products, and services with potential economic, social, and environmental benefits.

iii) Funding

Governments provide funding, grants, loans, and tax incentives to support innovation activities, startups, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and research institutions, helping them overcome financial barriers and accelerate their growth and development.

Overall, the government's role in innovation is multifaceted and essential for driving economic growth, improving public services, addressing societal challenges. By creating enabling environments, providing support mechanisms, and fostering collaboration and partnerships, governments can unlock the full potential of innovation to benefit society as a whole.

Lastly, as near the end of my speech I allow me to remind you that as we emphasise the importance of R&D and innovation, we must always be mindful not to neglect others actors within the interactions of our innovation systems, especially a need for strong and vibrant university-industry linkages. A dynamic system of innovation is a bedrock of a successful economy.

I thank you.

