



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

African Conference on Biotechnology

The Way Forward: A strategy for African Collaboration/Development

22 - 24 June 2008

Tripoli

**The Great Socialist People
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya**

TRIPOLI DECLARATION

We, the participants in this African Conference on Biotechnology held in Tripoli, The Great Socialist People Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (GSPLAJ) from 22 to 24 June 2008, working in the broad area of Biotechnology in Africa,

- a. Welcome the initiative of the Biotechnology Research Centre (BTRC) of Tripoli, *The GSPLAJ*, in cooperation with UNESCO, for having convened this African Conference;
- b. Convinced of the vital role of Biotechnology as one of the major driving forces for socio-economic development and contributing to the improvement in the quality of life and the attainment of the UN Millennium Development Goals¹, in particular Goals 1, 5, 6, 7;

¹ Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality
Goal 5: Improve maternal health
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability
Goal 8: Develop a Global Partnership for Development

c. Recalling the recommendations outlined in the *Science Agenda Framework for Action* as a follow-up to the UNESCO *World Conference on Science* (Budapest, Hungary 1999) in Item 39, which states that the "acceleration of technology transfer to promote industrial, economic and social development should be supported through the mobility of professionals between universities and industry and between countries, as well as through research networks and inter-firm partnerships."

d. Further Recalling The Communiqué of the *High-Level Ministerial Round Table "The Basic Sciences: The Science Lever for Development"* (UNESCO, Paris, October 2005) which indicated that:

- *Scientific knowledge must be a common heritage of humankind. Science is a vehicle for global cooperation; scientific research is an activity to be shared by all. The basic sciences know no borders, but should respect social and cultural contexts.* [para 4]
- *Capacity building should be enhanced through the sharing of best practices.* [para 16]
- *International support for capacity building, education, teacher training, research and innovation in the basic sciences should be promoted.* [para 17]
- *Member States should seek to benefit from regional, interregional (North-South, South-South) and global transdisciplinary cooperation in the basic sciences. The basic sciences themselves would be enriched by such cooperation on global problems and socially relevant issues.* [para 23]
- *A pivotal role should be played by regional centres and networks of excellence in advancing the knowledge, understanding and application of science, within the framework of regional and subregional structures.* [para 25]

e. Noting the recommendations of the Communiqué of the *Ministerial Round Table on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development and the Role of UNESCO* (UNESCO, Paris, October 2007) indicated that:

- *New partnerships in S&T, and new modalities of cooperation with and among developing countries, are required, with increasing*

emphasis on South-South and North-South-South (triangular) cooperation. [para 2b]

- *Institutional capacity-building can be enhanced, inter alia, through regional cooperation and the establishment of centres of excellence, institutional networking and the sharing of resources and infrastructures. [para 2e]*

Regional and international cooperation should be catalysed in key areas of S&T in response to development agendas. [para 2g]

f. Bearing in mind the principles of NEPAD, namely:

- *African ownership and leadership, as well as broad and deep participation by all sectors of society;*
- *Anchoring the development of Africa on its resources and resourcefulness of its people;*
- *Partnership between and amongst African peoples;*
- *Building the competitiveness of African countries and the continent;*
- *Forging a new international partnership that changes the unequal relationship between Africa and the developed world;*
and
- *Ensuring that all Partnerships with NEPAD are linked to the Millenium Development Goals and other agreed development goals and targets.*

g. Further noting the basic thrust of the objectives and actions elaborated in the *NEPAD Framework Document*, namely:

- *To promote cross-border cooperation and connectivity (in science and technology) by utilising the knowledge currently available in existing centres of excellence on the continent and to generate a critical mass of technological expertise in targeted areas that offer high growth potential, especially in biotechnology and natural sciences;*
- *To develop networks among existing centres of excellence in Africa and facilitate staff exchanges and training programmes;*
- *To jointly mobilise resources for capacity-building in order to enable all African countries to improve their health infrastructures and management*
- *In agriculture, to improve productivity, ensure food security for all, promote measures against natural resource degradation and encourage production methods that are environmentally*

sustainable; ultimately to make Africa a strategic player in the development of agricultural science and technology.

- h. Recognize that sharing of knowledge and scientific information, expert resources and training facilities in biotechnology is vital to the advancement of this science in the region and will enhance the capacity of African scientists to deal with regional challenges and priority issues of common interest;
- i. Recognize that inter-institutional collaboration in Africa in the area of Biotechnology can provide benefits to the region as a whole;
- j. Recognize the role of public-private partnership, including between institutions, in contributing to socio-economic development and quality of life;
- k. Also recognize that implementation of a common strategy of action in Biotechnology is imperative for a coherent approach in solving the needs in human capacity- building and the shortcomings in available infrastructure;
- l. Acknowledge the role of UNESCO within the United Nations system in facilitating inter-governmental exchange, promoting scientific collaboration and supporting the development of scientific advances;
- m. Recognizing and supporting existing efforts in biotechnology networks in Africa for instance those organized within the AU and NEPAD;
- n. Recognize the important role that the BTRC can play in mobilizing funds and promoting the development of biotechnology in the Region, and likewise, encouraging the active participation of other Centres in the Region;

In order to bridge the technological divide in Africa, reduce the brain drain effect and optimize the use of regional infrastructure and expertise,

With emphasis placed on issues of common interest and regional priorities in the areas of food production, agriculture, public health or the bio-industries, targeting vital human and institutional capacity-building with special emphasis on under-graduate and post-graduate research and training,

Recommend the following actions:

1. Establishment of a functional networking strategy in Biotechnology, for Africa and appoint a limited working group to design, in consultation with those present, the structure and functioning of the network and all practical procedures thereof

2. Making available through a common portal, the training opportunities available at our universities and research institutes and endeavour to provide a number of high-level training fellowships for African students, on a competitive basis
3. Establishment of a *Biotechnology Research and Development Fund for Africa* to actively promote the exchange of scientific information on research undertaken and its application in the field of Biotechnology and seek new modalities for cooperation with universities and research institutions in African countries
4. Actively promote adherence to the ethical norms for the appropriate development and use of biotechnology with due attention to indigenous knowledge systems and intellectual Property Rights

Further, we call upon Libya to,

5. Strengthen the BTRC with the technical assistance of UNESCO, to become a centre of excellence to support biotechnology research in all Africa and in this role, a potential centre under the auspices of UNESCO
6. Lead the initiative to establish a *Biotechnology Research and Development Fund for Africa*

In addition, we also seek UNESCO's help in the following

7. UNESCO should, in keeping with the priorities and programmes of regional networks in biotechnology, AU/NEPAD, and the regional economic communities,
 - a) Reinforce its efforts in providing guidance and disseminating of best practices for the formulation of national policies in science and technology research and application, in particular in the biological sciences and biotechnology, towards building research capacities
 - b) Where appropriate, assist with mobilization of funds for collaborative regional or national projects in the biological sciences and biotechnology, having

a high impact factor on public health, agriculture and food production, as well as other sectors, contributing to development.

c) Foster a culture of exchange, including at the inter-governmental level and facilitate information and data sharing in these and related fields.

8. Finally, call on the UN to set up, through its cluster system in support of AU/NEPAD, a mechanism for providing African students high-level training fellowships in biotechnology