

CONCEPT NOTE

INAUGURAL YOUTH IN SCIENCE AND INNOVATION INDABA

“Creating economic opportunities for youth through science, technology and innovation”
- "Nothing about the youth, for the youth without the youth"

CONTEXT

Youth is a critical part of society that is identified by the NDP as being critical in national growth and development. South Africa's youth currently constitutes 37% of the national population. On this basis, concerted effort has been placed in youth development as to harness the potential demographic dividend associated with having a majority of working age individuals in gainful employment. Despite the concerted effort, South Africa acknowledges that her youth faces a number of challenges including high levels of unemployment (estimated at more than 60% of the total unemployment), poverty and inequality (StatSA, 2016).

Young people are a major resource for development often acting as agents for social change, economic expansion and innovation. Their imagination, ideas, energy and vision are essential for continuous and sustainable socio-economic development. Research and statistical analysis indicate that the high rates of youth unemployment and its challenges are largely structural by nature. Efforts to tackle the scourge of youth unemployment therefore have to address structural factors relating to education and skills development. In line with the National Development Plan's recognition of the role of science, technology and innovation in transforming the economy and society, the engagement and meaningful inclusion of youth in this sector is not an luxury, but a strategic decision for South Africa's continuous growth and development.

Over the last two decades, the public component of the National System of Innovation (including institutions and policies) has been largely guided by the 1996 White Paper on Science and Technology. Recent critical reflections on the White Paper have highlighted weaknesses in reflecting upon and proposing measures to address challenges experienced by young people. The challenges and realities of young people are guided by a number of additional trends and insights, which continue to change as a result of knowledge sometimes embedded in technology and skill. There is anticipation that the world of work will undergo significant disruption due to knowledge and technology and South Africa has a small window of opportunity to take advantage of the demographic

dividend. Knowledge has assumed even greater importance over the last few decades as economies have moved towards being more knowledge-based. This includes profound changes in the ways in which knowledge is acquired, produced, and exploited.

The existing social profile of youth can, in part, be attributed to effective functioning of the National System of Innovation. There is therefore an urgent need for focus attention on the involvement and interaction of young people with and within the NSI. However, as social commentators have pointed out the world over, an essential requirement is to provide young people with 'voice', one that is actionable and contributes towards inclusive national growth and development. It is in this regard that a Youth in the Knowledge Economy Assembly is proposed. The proposed approach is therefore aimed at both providing young people with a platform to shape the evolution of the NSI as well as looking holistically at youth within the knowledge economy. There is also a need for the new White Paper to interface with the current Cabinet-approved National Youth Policy (2015-2020) and ensure alignment with future iterations of this policy.

It is expected that 500 youth shall participate in this Youth in Science and Technology Indaba Indaba which is a structured dialogue intended to improve engagement and inclusion of the youth in a responsive STI system. This event will also reflect on Agenda 2063 in an effort to ensure that the South African youth is better informed and more aware of the Africa agenda and opportunities to collaborate and engage with other African countries. The Indaba will reflect on youth across the STI system (including STI policy, Research and Development; innovation; Technology businesses; Science engagement; STEM) and seek to achieve a more intentional and deliberate inclusive youth in STI agenda. The engagement will be led by youth to ensure that the discussions and recommendations on better engagement and advancing inclusion of youth in STI are led by the youth. The DST and its entities, business and non-government sectors are already implementing a number of activities intended to include youth across the STI system. On this basis, youth in the business and non-government sector shall be invited to attend this summit.

The main goals of the Youth in STI Summit include the following:

a). Reflecting on progress made with regard to inclusion of the youth across the STI system (STI policy, Research and Development; innovation; Technology businesses; Science engagement; STEM) and these reflections may contribute in better

understanding and improving the state of youth in STI.

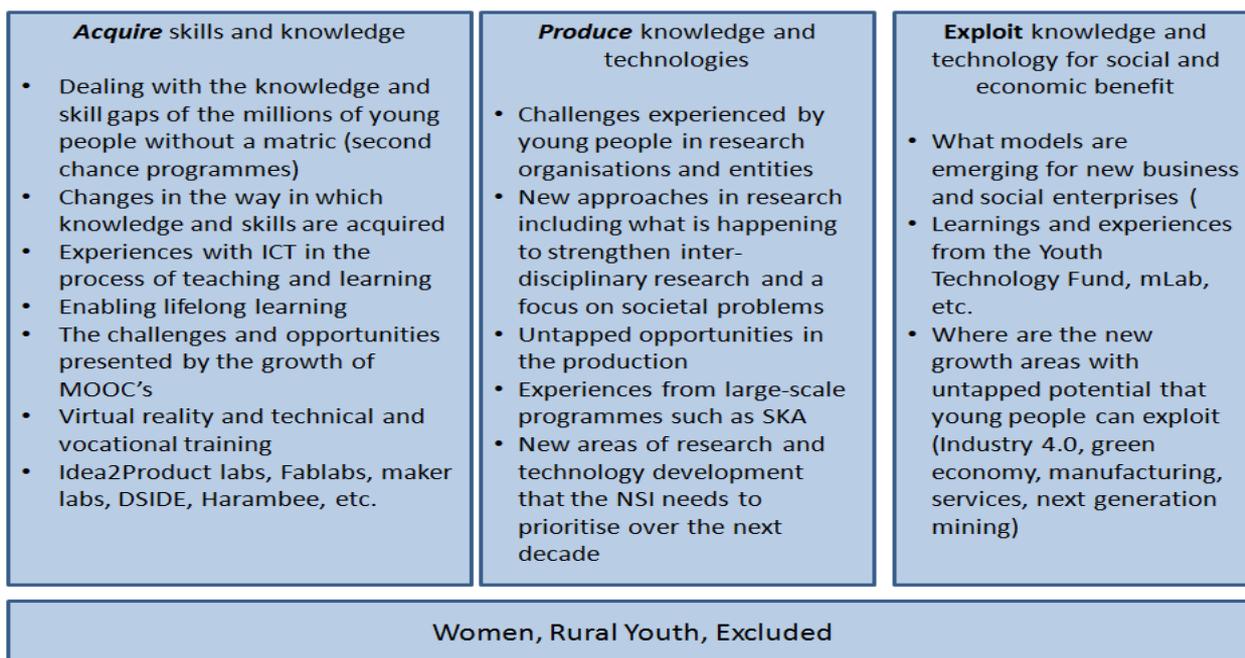
- b). Engage the youth and seek their recommendations in employing STI to address their key challenges, in line with national growth and development.
- c). Engage the youth on how STI institutions can better respond to their STI needs to advance township and rural economies.
- d). Engage the youth on reflecting on Agenda 2063 and the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals agenda and the opportunities in this regard.
- e). Acquire input from the youth for developing an implementable plan of action to improve youth participation and advancement in STI. This input will contribute towards the “Youth Statement” or “Youth Agreement” that shall be signed at the end of the summit. It should be highlighted that the DST and its entities are already engaging the youth across the STI system and as such, the “Youth Statement” or “Youth Agreement” will build on existing activities and acquire specific input from the youth in future plans with regard to their role, responsibility in STI as part of national growth and development.

The youth at the summit will also be afforded an opportunity to showcase their STI achievements and as such, there will be exhibitions at the Indaba. The summit will also aim at recognizing youth leaders across STI system and will set a periodic tone of reflecting on inclusion of youth in the STI system. Hosting of this Indaba is in line with the draft Innovation for Inclusive Development strategy that prioritises youth as one of the key target audiences for inclusion and employing STI to advance national growth and development.

The graphic below provides an organizing framework and the kinds of issues that need to be considered and which will be enhanced and deepened through the envisaged process.

Table 1: Proposed organizing framework for the Youth in the Knowledge Economy Assembly

Youth and the Knowledge Economy



The 2-day inaugural youth Indaba and the graphic below provide a high-level mock programme.

Proposed programme	
<p>Day 1 (9 June 2017)</p> <p>9:00 – 09:10 Welcome remarks by DG Mjwara</p> <p>Opening Plenary</p> <p>09:10 – 09:20 Welcome remarks by Hon B Manamela, Presidency</p> <p>09:20 – 09:30 Africa Perspective: SADC/AU representative</p> <p>09:30 - 09:50 South African Youth Council</p> <p>09:50 – 10h20 Keynote address: Minister N Pandor</p> <p>10:30 – 11:00 Tea</p> <p>11:00 - 13:00 Parallel sessions</p> <p>13:00 – 14:00 Lunch</p> <p>14:00 – 16:00 Parallel sessions continue</p> <p>16:00 – 16:30 Engagement with Business</p> <p>Parallel sessions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> STEM STI Entrepreneurship Research & Development Enabling STI policy environment Grassroots innovation 	<p>Day 2 (10 June 2017)</p> <p>08:45 – 09:00 Recap of Day 1</p> <p>09:00 – 10:30 Parallel sessions wrap-up and recommendations</p> <p>10:30 – 11:00 Tea</p> <p>11:00 - 13:00 Report-back from parallel sessions</p> <p>13:00 – 14:00 Lunch</p> <p>14:00 – 15:00 Report back (cont.)</p> <p>15:00 – 15h30 Plenary: strengthening youth in STI</p> <p>15:30 – 16:00 STI Youth Statement</p> <p>16:00 – 16:15 Closing session (Minister Pandor)</p>
<p>Exhibitions: showcasing STI activities by youth and youth STI activities of the DST and its entities</p>	

The proposed activities should represent a collective effort of the DST and its entities. The graphic below provides an indication of how the organization of the activities will happen. Programme 5 has been in discussions with the National Youth Development Agency who have committed to cooperate with the DST in hosting the Youth Assembly.

REFERENCES

Statistics South Africa (2016), Vulnerable Group Series 1 - Social Profile of Youth 2009-2014

Presidency (2015), National Youth Policy (2015-2020)