APPENDIX II

DECISIONS OF THE 2010 COMESA SUMMIT ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

Every year the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) chooses a theme to guide its activities for regional integration. The theme for the 2010 COMESA Summit held in Swaziland was “Harnessing Science and Technology for Development.” The Chairman of COMESA for this year, His Majesty King Mswati III of the Royal Kingdom of Swaziland, stressed the need for concrete initiatives on science, technology, and innovation that can lead to tangible results for the region. In his address to the summit, he underscored the critical importance of science and technology and made some concrete proposals. He proposed the establishment of technology parks, the creation of an Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Training and Skills Development Fund, and the elaboration of a common ICT curriculum for COMESA to introduce young people to ICT at an early age. He undertook to do everything possible to ensure that the science and technology programs are implemented as agreed.

The Council of Ministers, at their meeting, reached concrete decisions, which the summit fully endorsed. The deliberations in Council are set out below.
The Council received a video recorded presentation from Calestous Juma, a Kenyan national who is a Professor of Development Practice at Harvard Kennedy School. Building on a paper circulated for the meeting as the background document for the agenda item on harnessing science and technology, the presentation underscored the importance of science and technology for development and provided a historical perspective to cycles of technological revolutions over the years, as well as a critical discussion of contemporary issues that Africa faces in pursuing its development priorities, suggesting concrete ways forward, with examples, on key issues. Copies of the presentation will be made available to delegations.

The presentation made the following recommendations for establishing an institutional framework for harnessing science and technology in COMESA:

- Creating a high-level committee of science, technology and innovation;
- Establishing offices of science, technology and innovation at the highest level of Government in the Member States and at the Secretariat to support the Governments of the Member States and the Secretary General respectively;
- Promoting regional academies of science, technology and engineering;
- Establishing an Innovation Award for outstanding accomplishment; and
- Setting up a professional or graduate school of regional integration.

In considering these recommendations, Council urged Member States to establish this institutional framework at the national level. Furthermore, the Secretariat should have an Advisory Office on Science and Technology.
In addition, the presentation made specific recommendations on harnessing science and technology in the region in specific areas, including the following, which Council, in its deliberations, noted were only examples of a wide array of possible initiatives:

- Available cost effective technology for promoting access to medical facilities particularly in rural areas should be utilised by Member States as appropriate, such as ultrasound technology and health-services that can be facilitated by mobile telephony;

- In the area of education, innovative initiatives for promoting access to education material, such as the [One Laptop per Child] project, currently in use worldwide, including in Rwanda, should be championed by COMESA Member States;

- In the life sciences, COMESA should utilise available information generated through the decoding and annotation of various genomes, to apply it in various areas such as developing crops that are adapted to the geographical conditions of the region;

- Noting that the available stock of technological knowledge increases exponentially, doubling every 12 months, and to take advantage of rapidly reducing costs of technological products, COMESA needs to develop mechanisms for harnessing relevant available technological knowledge worldwide; but for this to be possible, mechanisms should be put in place for developing the technical capacity to know and absorb the available knowledge worldwide in order to be able to apply it as appropriate in dealing with challenges that face the region in key priority areas such as agriculture, infrastructure, information and communications, public health, clean energy and water, environmental protection, and trade and economics. In particular, there is need to
mobilise and organise the region’s scientists and engineers and encourage incremental innovation by individuals and SMEs;

- In the area of telecommunications, the various undersea and land cable networks for connecting up Africa and connecting Africa to the rest of the world should be utilised by Member States and stakeholders including the private sector, bearing in mind that Africa has significantly contributed financially to installing them; and

- COMESA should utilise the wireless broad band access that is going to be delivered in the tropics around the world by the set of 16 satellites being launched.

The Council welcomed the presentation and commended the Secretariat for arranging the presentation from such a brilliant son of Africa. The Council extensively deliberated the presentation and adopted Decisions. In terms of the way forward regarding the institutional framework, the Council noted the need for inter-ministerial coordination in order to avoid uncoordinated approaches, and in this regard, the vital importance of overarching executive leadership at a high level of Government. At the level of the Secretariat, if the Office of Advisor on Science and Technology is set up, it should be structured in a manner that ensures mainstreaming of science and technology in all the other programs and that avoids a silo approach, and it should have the primary objective of assisting Member States in their science and technology programs.

**Decisions**

The Council adopted the recommendations of the presentation and underscored the importance of mainstreaming science and technology in all COMESA programs and of adopting a cost effective approach that does not financially overburden the Member States and the Secretariat.
Furthermore, the Council urged Member States to:

- Promote the commercialisation of research and development, and put in place initiatives for improvement and standardisation of traditional products, innovating them into products that can be commercialised;
- Consider using biotechnology in the cropping sector in order to increase the outputs in the region, working with partners such as ECA and NEPAD, and taking into account the enormous biodiversity in the region;
- Dedicate at least 1% of the Gross Domestic Product to research and development, in line with the target set within the framework of the African Union;
- Consider adopting initiatives for promoting and utilising nano technology and science, given its application in various key areas such as medical treatment resulting from much higher levels of precision;
- Put in place concrete mechanisms for leveraging science and technology to address the key priorities in the region;
- Establish data bases for identifying individuals with the right profiles that can assist the implementation of science and technology initiatives in COMESA;
- Harmonise and coordinate their policy frameworks on science and technology at the COMESA level; and
- Elaborate and adopt master plans and blue prints for leveraging technological knowledge, for harnessing science and technology, and for mobilising the required resources.

Council decided also that:

- Member States should consider establishing Science and Technology Committees and Advisory Office at the highest level of Government;
- The Secretariat should establish an Office of Advisor on Science and Technology; and
An Annual Innovation Award should be established to recognise outstanding accomplishment.

**Broad Band Wireless Interactive System**

Regarding a Broad Band Wireless Interactive System, the Council received a PowerPoint presentation, which was presented to the Fourth Meeting of the Ministers of Infrastructure at its meeting, 29–30 July 2010. The Report of that Meeting, reference CS/ID/MIN/IV/2, in paragraphs 384 to 388, provides the deliberations by the Infrastructure Ministers and a recommendation on this matter.

**Recommendation**

The Council noted the deliberations of the Infrastructure Ministers on this matter and endorsed the recommendation that pilot projects be developed to deploy the COBIS system in selected COMESA Member States following which when successfully implemented can be expanded for region-wide deployment.

**Directives of the COMESA Heads of State and Government on Harnessing Science and Technology**

The Heads of State and Government as well deliberated this matter of harnessing science and technology and listened to the video presentation of Professor Calestous Juma. They directed as follows, endorsing the Decisions of the Ministers:

- Where possible, pool resources and combine efforts to establish common science and technology parks;
- Promote the commercialisation of research and development, and put in place initiatives for improvement and
standardisation of traditional products, innovating them into products that can be commercialised;

• Consider using biotechnology in the cropping sector in order to increase the outputs in the region, working with partners such as ECA and NEPAD, and taking into account the enormous biodiversity in the region;

• Dedicate at least 1% of the Gross Domestic Product to research and development, in line with the target set within the framework of the African Union;

• Consider adopting initiatives for promoting and utilising nanotechnology and science, given its application in various key areas such as medical treatment resulting from much higher levels of precision;

• Develop a common curriculum in ICT that enables COMESA citizens to be exposed to ICT at an early age;

• Create a central fund that will concentrate on availing financial resources towards funding programs for ICT training and skills development;

• Establish data bases for identifying individuals with the right profiles that can assist the implementation of science and technology initiatives in COMESA;

• Harmonise and coordinate their policy frameworks on science and technology at the COMESA level; and

• Elaborate and adopt master plans and blue prints for leveraging technological knowledge, for harnessing science and technology, and for mobilising the required resources.

In addition:

• Member States should consider establishing Science and Technology Committees and Advisory Offices at the highest level of Government;

• The Secretariat should establish an Office of Advisor on Science and Technology;
• An Annual Innovation Award should be established to recognise outstanding accomplishment; and
• Member States should adopt a policy for harnessing science and technology.

Furthermore, the Heads of State and Government endorsed the COMESA Policy on Intellectual Property Rights and Cultural Industries as adopted by the Ministers.