Briefing Note

DEPARTMENT OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

ANNUAL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER FORUM ON

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs)

(*DST STI FORUM*)

February 2019

Summary

The forum was called under the auspices of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) for key stakeholders from the public and private entities to convene annually to discuss cooperation and coordination, as well as activities on Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) around thematic areas for the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 1st Annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (**DST STI Forum**), hosted in partnership with the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), took place at the CSIR International Convention Centre, Pretoria on 05 December 2018.

The forum featured four presentations by the DST, Statistics SA (Stats SA), the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and the South African SDG Hub based at the University of Pretoria. The forum intended to solicit input from stakeholders to develop the national STI for SDGs Action Plan in preparation for the member states Voluntary National Review (VNR) report to be presented to the United Nations (UN) in 2019. The VNR seeks to facilitate the sharing of information including challenges, successes and lessons learned to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

It is anticipated that these forums can inform how the DST's policy levers should be utilised in a more strategic way to highlight the gains the country was making through using STI to achieve local targets and priorities and to position the country as one that is able to provide lessons, solutions and approaches that feed the global environment.

Introduction

In 2015, South Africa joined other member states of the United Nations (UN) to sign and ratify the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda). The UN consequently established the Technology Facilitation Mechanism (TFM) to leverage STI in realising the 2030 Agenda. The annual UN STI Forum (Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for SDGs) was then established to discuss the inclusion of STI in the implemention SDGs. The forum calls on for member states to develop and implement inclusive STI for SDG action plans/roadmaps or strategies as part of the national responses to the 2030 Agenda.

In the South African context, the DST is tasked to coordinate the development and implementation of the national STI for SDGs action plan. This action plan is intended to enhance and position the National System of Innovation (NSI) to meaningfully contribute to national, regional, continental and global efforts and to implement and integrate the SDGs into STI policies, specifically the draft White Paper on STI.

Welcome Address and Overview of the Annual Multi-Stakeholder Forum

Prof Himla Soodyall, Executive Officer of the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf), who also serves on the InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) working group on Science, Medicine and Engineering, noted that the forum intends to better understand the activities surrounding the SDGs, with respect to STI in populating the STI strategy for Africa (STI-SA 2024 Agenda). She highlighted that the forum intended to gain insights into what the various stakeholders were doing and consider possible areas of common interest in order to come up with a strategic way that South Africa could take leadership towards addressing the agenda that the DST has set.

Mr Imraan Patel, Deputy Director-General (DDG): Socio-Economic Innovation Partner-ships at DST said that the forum was an important instrument to provide the opportunity for stakeholders to come together annually creating a space to have conversations and create a community around the SDGs. He noted that South Africa had not yet developed a strategic response, particularly on the STI front, to how the SDGs could be used to address other national interests. He further highlighted the necessity for the STI sector to engage with other government departments, public and the private sector.

National Strategy: Facilitation and Reporting Mechanisms of STI for SDGs

Speakers included representatives from the DST, which have been tasked to coordinate the development and implem-entation of the national STI for SDGs Action Plan. Stats SA shared insightful information and mechanisms of reporting on South Africa's baseline reporting on SDGs, while the DPME alluded that the department has developed a model to co-ordinate the work on SDGs.

Ms Nonhlanhla Mkhize, Chief Director: Innovation for Inclusive Development, DST, acknowledged that SDGs are not a government responsibility but a national responsibility. Every stakeholder within the various levels of government, the private sector, non-government organisations (NGOs) and the research community has a role to play in ensuring that the country contributes to the global agenda within the context of national priorities.

She further stated that South Africa will be submitting it's first VNR in 2019 to report on progress with regard to the SDGs, and the DST, together with the relevant national stakeholders, is exploring a mechanism to support submissions from South Africa to this global online platform, which takes into account best practices and lessons learned from other initiatives. Since the first UN annual multi-stakeholder STI Forum, much consider-ation has been made in framing national STI for SDG Action Plans to guide and ensure deliberate and intentional integration and leveraging of STI for the SDGs.

The critical elements of the STI for SDG action plan pursued by the country are policy coherence (with developmental priorities), monitoring and evaluation (M&E), interdis-ciplinary research and development (R&D), technology deployment and transfer, resourcing, and dialogue. South Africa needs a concerted strategy to address its response to the SDGs from a STI perspective and a comprehensive list of all STI-related activities responding to each of the SDGs.

Ms Aluwani Makuya, Head: Sectoral Work-ing Group (SWG), Stats SA, explained the process used for compiling the 2017 Baseline Report. The report included the UN's indicators, domesticated (or proxy) and additional (supplementary to SDGs) indic-

ators, which were grouped under four themes: social, economic, environmental, and peace and security goals. She indicated that South Africa was able to report on 68% of the social goals, 54% of the economic goals, 60% of the environmental goals and 73% of the peace and security goals, respectively. Ms Makuya further noted that challenges were experienced in relation to the sheer volume of indicators, accessing new data sources and from non-traditional data suppliers, and a lack of data for reporting on SDGs. These bi-annual country reports form part of the key inputs to the VNR report and the final full-scale country report will be in 2031.

Dr Kefiloe Masiteng, Deputy Secretary: National Planning Commission, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, DPME, stated that the DPME has developed a model for the country that would ensure that systems were in place to coordinate the work that was being conducted in terms of reporting and reviewing on SDGs, their domestication and the country's own development trajectories alongside the regional, continental and global development agenda. She further alluded that, for the model to work effectively, it is necessary to present the indicators in a better way, with full participation of all sectors. Domesticated indicators should be owned and supported by these sectors and that planning, implementation, policymaking, M&E and reporting, ought to be fully coordinated. She highlighted that the VNR report should not be a mere summary of thematic report, however, the information should reflect the *status quo* and the way forward to advance the country's development agenda.

The South African SDG Hub

Prof Willem Fourie, Associate Professor at the University of Pretoria and Co-odinator of the South African SDG Hub indicated that the hub, hosted by the University of Pretoria and supported by DST, emerged to create a meta-platform to link policymakers with SDG-relevant research. Peer-reviewed research outputs have a direct and critical relevance in providing solutions to support evidence-informed policies. One of the key challenges identified seems to be in the coordination and dissemination of research knowledge, rather than the production of research relevant to the implementation of SDGs. Though every researcher intends making policy impact, it is close to impossible given the number of publications locally and across the world. Therefore, it is advisable for members from research institutions to mobilise themselves in the national context and engage with policymakers about the research they do. There would be a greater likelihood of success and of raising the profile of the work they do.

Way Forward and Recommendations

The forum provided a platform for discussions during the Q&A sessions to further interrogate the information from the presentations. Ms Mkhize requested participants to provide input in how to develop the STI for SDGs action plan and the following recommendations were put forward:

1. Integrate what already exists for the good of the STI for SDGs by putting in place mechanisms that build partnerships relating to STI for SDGs. *This can be realised by better participation of government departments, business, civil society, academia and the science councils, co-ordination by DST/DPME and input from these sectors to decide on priorities and create an enabling environment. Better communication amongst the SDG leaders to identify*

where each entity fits to each of the SDGs.

2. Consider effective linkages between the research, development and innovation (RDI) or inter-disciplinary research and practitioners to create opportunities to link and achieve technology deployment. *DST should consider integration between the RDIs or inter-disciplinary research to create opport-unities to link, e.g. Water with health, water with information and com-munication techn-ology (ICT), etc. There is vast research and technology developed in the country to address the SDG-related challenges, as a result, DST is engaging with colleagues responsible for RDIs within DST to ensure that this knowledge is taken into consideration.*

3. Create a platform in a form of a dashboard to share, communicate, upload and provide real-time inform-ation on specific SDG-related themes such as water, ICT etc. *A portal to track the indicators will be up and it will be expanded to not only track SDG performance but also to track activities of the national development agenda and the 2063 Agenda, and systemat-ically and progressively include regional and other development agendas. Stakeholder participation is therefore critical in the development of what information is uploaded and shared.*

4. Strategic nominations from the STI community should be made to serve on high-level platforms such as the Presi-dential Commission on the 4th Industrial Revolution to provide an STI perspective to the agenda.

5. Identify 20% Key Performance Areas (KPAs) among the 17 SDGs that would have an 80% impact on the rest of the SDGs by mapping out the country's

priorities against the SDG indicators. *The inclusion of case studies is important as well as they show the most innovation.*

6. Most efforts should ideally be concen-trated on SDG 1 (No poverty). *Because until hunger and poverty are addressed, it will be difficult to address other SDGs, and agriculture plays a central role in realising SDG 1.*

7. Find the best way to represent the performance of the country in terms of its international obligations, while taking into consideration areas of importance for the country.

8. The country needs to be strategy-driven and not data-driven.

Enquiries to:
Dr Tebogo Mabotha
Email: tebogo@assaf.org.za
Tel.: 012 349 6612

Glossary

AAAA	Addis Ababa Action Agenda
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
IAP	InterAcademy Partnership
ICT	Information and communication technology
KPAs	Key Performance Areas
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
NGO	Non-government organisation
NSI	National System of Innovation
R&D	Research and development
RDI	Research, development and innovation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Stats SA	Statistics South Africa
STI	Science, technology and innovation
TFM	Technology Facilitation Mechanism
SWG	Sectoral Working Group
UN	United Nations
VNR	Voluntary National Review