

Dear recipient,

**Press Release: Finland Africa Platform for Sustainable Development Goal9.**

In August, the Finland-Africa Platform for SDG9 convened key stakeholders to map out practical and strategic steps towards the achievement of SDG 9 (Innovation) in Africa.

Over 100 participants gathered at the University of Turku, Finland, on 26-27 August 2019 to brainstorm on the implementation and functioning of the Finland-Africa Platform for Sustainable Development Goal 9 (innovation). Participants sought to come up with practical steps on how the parties can strategically work together towards achieving the SDG9 before the end of 2030.

The platform is a partnership between the University of Turku and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). A MoU signed between the two parties assigned the University of Turku the role of acting as the Finnish institutional node and platform for supporting and advancing the SDG9 of the United Nations in Africa, especially through research, education, and capacity building in innovation.

Following the two days of intensive deliberations, participants recommended that SDG9 (innovation, industrialisation and their relationship to Finnish research and education) should be recognised as Finland's competitive advantage and a particular area wherein Finland can focus on creating significant impact in Africa. Participants unanimously recognised and acknowledged Africa as the continent of the future and Finland's potential role in contributing to development in Africa, especially in the area of SDG9. Participants therefore called for a reinforced development co-operation with Africa focusing on Finnish innovation in accordance with the synergistic vision of the platform. This includes Finland expanding the scale and scope of its innovation-related operations in Africa but also increasing the knowledge and information base about Africa in Finland on the on-going socio-economic, innovation and technological transformation, especially around SDG9. The University of Turku was acknowledged as one of the most active Finnish and Nordic universities in Africa and congratulated for taking the important step to strengthen its connections to Africa through the partnership with UNECA.

Participants also called for sustainable institutionalisation and incorporating the platform at the University of Turku for the benefit of related institutions and agencies in Finland. This is to help improve the much-needed synergy between Finnish universities, universities of applied sciences, individual actors and innovation agencies and other active networks in Finland around the SDG9 in Africa. Participants welcomed the inter-ministerial involvement (Ministries of Education and Culture, Development Cooperation and Trade, Foreign Affairs) at the seminar, kick-off of the platform, and called for the continuous commitment of all related ministerial structures to help the platform in taking a national shape. It was also noted that the ministries can facilitate the synergy around SDG9 towards Africa through different mechanisms, such as aligning the vision and mission of the platform with their respective ministerial and national strategies on Africa. Also, facilitating the functioning and funding of the platform will be key in achieving the targets of the platform. Participants welcomed the possibility of creating a separate funding framework for the platform for Finnish researchers and innovators to work in Africa and vice-versa within the context of SDG9.

The UNECA delegation and its leadership were appreciated by all present for their participation in the seminar and for their commitment through the partnership agreement with the University of Turku. UNECA's indispensable role as a continental organisation for

economic development in Africa and in the orientation of the platform's activities around their visions and priorities, especially in SDG9 in Africa, was highlighted.

Participants also acknowledged the interest and crucial role of international development agencies and NGOs, such as the United Nations Association and agencies in Finland, in the attainment of SDG9 in Africa. Furthermore, several funding agencies and various foundations in Finland participated in the seminar. Participants also included the representatives of almost half of the Finnish universities and universities of applied science. The seminar highlighted the importance of commitment to the platform and a synergistic concept for effective contribution to SDG9 in Africa.

The platform recognised the indispensable role of African alumni of the Finnish universities as the bridge to SDG9 in Africa and conveyors of relevant knowledge resources in Africa. Finally, the seminar participants thanked the organising committee as well as everyone who travelled to Turku from around Finland and Africa to take part in the launch of the platform, and for the interesting presentations. The seminar participants were also full of praise for the strong political support of the Finnish Government.

The seminar was presided over by Li Andersson, Minister of Education for Finland, and Jukka Kola, Rector of the University of Turku, Finland. Also in attendance were the Mayor of Turku and the Ambassador for Innovation in Finland, as well as other high profile representatives from various Ministries in Finland. The meeting convened the representatives of Finnish universities and ministries, UNECA, UN agencies in Finland, Finnish business organisations, and over 15 African countries and universities including African alumni of Finnish universities. The seminar featured numerous activities, high level panel discussions and workshops to contribute to the future of the platform as well as over 20 sessions that showcased potential projects to be up scaled for the current economic, scientific and technological transformation in Africa.

The next forum of the Finland-Africa Platform for SDG9 (innovation) will be held in 2020, at a venue and date to be announced later. However, a meeting of interested stakeholders will convene in November 2019 at the University of Turku to plan the long and short-term visions, strategy and activities of the Finland-Africa Platform for SDG9.

In Turku, Finland, on 13 September 2019  
Organising committee, Finland-Africa Platform for Sustainable Development Goal9.  
University of Turku and United Nations Economic Commission for Africa.