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Africa Innovation Policy Manifesto

V2.0D

Co-created and Adopted at the First AIPTF Technical Meeting

May 13-15, 2019

Kigali, Rwanda

The Innovation for Policy Alliance

I4policy.org/Manifesto

We, innovation community leaders and entrepreneurs across Africa, come united in diversity to articulate and share our views and recommendations for policies that we believe will accelerate digital transformation and contribute to a more equitable, inclusive and sustainable development of our economies and societies. [1]

We believe:

- that the youth, creatives, entrepreneurs and innovation communities are shaping Africa's future.
- in Africa as a strong, united and resilient leader, partner and influential global pioneer.
- in active, inclusive, collective and shared value initiatives.

The actors who have undersigned this document are ready and willing to strategically engage with policymakers to further this agenda.

Vision and Purpose

Our vision is to realize an *equitable, inclusive and sustainable Africa* By co-creating meaningful policies that can translate to tangible act!mion and meaningful impact.

This vision will be realized by embracing a strong cultural identity, shared values, and ethics. Further, by focusing on people-driven development, relying on the potential of the continent, calling for and championing good governance and democracy.

Our purpose is to: **Transform Africa by continuous innovation and active civic engagement.**

[1] This is following consideration of the 2063 African Union Agenda rooted in Pan Africanism and African Renaissance.

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Core Values :

- Inclusive Innovation (Kwaniso)
- Transparency (Obala)
- Commitment and dedication (Mandenka)
- Unity (Harambee)
- Responsibility and accountability (Umlando)
- Collaboration (Ubuntu)
- Self-reliance (Agaciro)

Our Values

I. **Kwaniso (Inclusive Innovation)**
We value an inclusive and diversified representation of communities and cultures from the continent while leveraging innovation as a tool for sustainable economic development.

II. **Obala (Transparency)**
We prioritize respect and transparency in fostering trust, unity, safe spaces of expression on the continent.

III. **Mandenka (Commitment and Dedication)**
We are committed to our societies and dedicated to being models of civic engagement to build a sustainable economy.

IV. **Harambee (Unity)**
We value empathy and coming together to understand community challenges, choices, and culture.

V. **Umlando (Responsibility and Accountability)**
We believe development and innovation are only valuable when they are driven by social and environmental sustainability.

VI. **Ubuntu (Collaboration)**
We believe in our collective force to influence global innovation. Shared resources have the potential to create different kinds of value rooted in collective intelligence.

VII. **Agaciro (Self Reliance)**
We value initiatives and policies for African communities by African communities through bottom up approaches.

Our Goals

This manifesto provides a strategic framework and road map for action that calls policymakers, civil society and the innovation community to work together to achieve the following goals:

1. Goal 1: Integrate open innovation methodologies for civic engagement.
2. Goal 2: Increased research and development and innovation education.
3. Goal 3: Effective use of the Internet for democracy.
4. Goal 4: Promote inclusivity and human-centeredness.
5. Goal 5: Reduced cost of internet access and increased African-hosted content.

Recommendations For Good Public Policy

We recognize that good public policies should be contextualized and localized, and recommend the following manners to be adapted in this document and applied in other cases.

Inclusiveness

A good public policy;

- Engages the people who are affected by the respective policies in all steps through inclusive stakeholder engagement processes.
- Is based on a consensual agenda setting.
- Opens up the capacity for bottom-up participation through education and knowledge transfer around the content of the policy. It is simple, and accompanied by user manuals.

Complementation and Revisability

A good public policy;

- Consistently maps the ecosystem that it revolves around in order to adapt to changes.
- Is revisable and defines the need for evaluation, continuous improvement and reform of existing policies therefore it will have the ability to survive in complex systems and contexts.

Measurability and Conciseness

A good public policy;

- Translates with ease across cultural and language barriers and forms concepts into tangible outcomes as well as impacts.
- Leverages open innovation processes and technology to aggregate concepts and ideas in its formulation.
- Takes into consideration the resources and infrastructure available in the countries, communities and societies of its intended implementation.

People-Centric Approach

A good public policy;

- Recognizes the need for people to understand how public policies affect them and therefore is simple, and accompanied by user manuals.
- Adopts conflict management strategies to best resolve disputes around varying interests.
- Open, transparent, accessible, and devoid of all forms of institutional and individual corruption.
- Establishes partnerships between the public and the national private sector in its consultation phase - that will allow it to have the desired impact.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Robust and performant Infrastructures, both physical and soft, are crucial and fundamentally necessary for the enabling of a flourishing innovation private sector ecosystem, access to basic services, global competitiveness, that could really drive business entrepreneurship and catalyse the African digital society of tomorrow.

I- The development of ICT infrastructures

We propose :

- Our governments to agree, elaborate and adopt an African Pact of Digital Citizenship and Innovation Regulations.

- Our governments to undertake a deep mapping out of all the regulations, laws and institutional disposals which hamper the development of ICT infrastructures and Africa Digital transformation for their review and adaptation ;

- A decisive panafrican engagement to invest in sustainable and secure ICT infrastructure that is conducive to innovation to foster the penetration of both mobile and broadband, through an ambitious mechanism of 10% commitment of African GDP, in order to attain by 2025, 1 Gbit/s connections available for 99 % of inhabitants, companies and public buildings of our continent ;

- Acknowledging public-private partnerships (PPPs) as a powerful and practical mechanism to bring forward the economic benefits of ultra-fast broadband

Infrastructures, and hereby engage all the stakeholders for the creation of a High Council of PPP for African Digital Transformation, to foster well tailored policies ;

- A panafrican cooperation that will foster infrastructure sharing, as a strategic and genuine mechanism that can reduce the national cost of infrastructure development and facilitate a fast and efficient extending of internet penetration ;

- A strategy of cost-efficient construction of optical fibre networks through a streamlining of the regulation on the placement of telecommunications cables ;

- The creation of a Panafrican Cybersecurity Council to shape the orientations of policies on african digital defense, data protection, etc.

II- Democratization of access of infrastructures

We encourage our governments to accelerate the digital transformation through improving access to high-speed connectivity for our people and institutions including but not limited to government agencies, local governments, universities, hubs ;

We reaffirm the principle of universality of access to infrastructures

We propose to:

1. Use past experiences to guide decision making: mapping of past & existing infrastructures and projects, learn from successes and failures in order to make better decisions in the future.

2. Continue and strengthen the development of broadband infrastructure for transmission and access networks by encouraging the sharing of telecommunication infrastructures, and pool infrastructure between different types of networks for new projects:

2.1. The pooling of infrastructures between the networks to reduce the cost of laying fiber by "Dig Once" approach.

2.2. Promote competition between mobile network operators by:

- Encouraging the creation of mobile virtual network operators (MVNOs): Unlike MNOs, virtual operators do not own any physical infrastructure. They share the unused/excess capacity of traditional network operators. As firms compete for

market share, the cost of internet can fall, diversity in service provision increases for the consumer and results in improved access (see Kenya).

- Introducing number portability

3. Promote the creation of local infrastructures to reduce cost of access:

Hosting content locally significantly reduces the latency and cost of content delivery, in turn making it more accessible for the local community. The lack of local infrastructure in African countries, such as data centers, routers, servers, content delivery networks (CDNs) and Internet Exchange Points is one of the key challenges Internet Society identifies as being needed to drive wider and deeper internet usage. This will allow the optimisation of the usage of international broadband resources by keeping the traffic locally/in the region.

4. Develop local infrastructures to attain **Digital Sovereignty:**

At the core of Digital Sovereignty is the attempt to let the end users keep authority over their personal data. The rules of law that applies to data are those of the country where it is stored (e.g. GDPR states that the data should not leave the EU). With the rapid development of AI, the economic value has shifted to data. We are running the risk of being at the mercy of external powers and losing our sovereignty if we do not build infrastructures to locally store (datacentres) and transmit our data.

5. Implement policies and regulation to promote Open Access to landing stations and international capacity:

Open access to landing stations and international capacity can reduce prices. Huge differences among countries in the price per unit of bandwidth are often explained by variations in the wholesale market competition and bottlenecks in the supply of international bandwidth, especially in landlocked countries.

To address these problems, governments need to promote open access to international gateways and greater competition in the supply of international bandwidth, with targeted interventions to stimulate the market as necessary.

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT (R&D)

Recognizing that education is the most critical factor to accelerating innovation, digital and socio-economic transformation, we rb ecommend governments urgently adopt a three-pronged approach to stimulating R&D and innovation education across the continent: investing in R&D, amplifying indigenous R&D and co-creating education systems and curriculum redesign together with a broad coalition of partners, such as labs and civic spaces, emphasizing e-learning tools and do-it-yourself, hands-on learning, rewarding experimentation, failure and critical thinking, and teaching digital and financial literacy and software skills.

We propose:

Investments in Education and R&D

- Apportioning a percentage of national fiscal budgets to various Research and Development and Innovation education, such as our national commitments to invest at least 1% of GDP in R&D;
- Establishing Innovation Funds, for example, allocating a percentage of Universal Services Funds towards Education and R&D;

Curriculum Co-creation and Redesign

- Developing strategic partnerships with different ecosystem players to co-create curriculum at all levels of learning by;
    a) Redefining learning techniques in our schools, primary, secondary and tertiary levels, by promoting collaboration and co-creation;
    b) Embed a culture of creativity in schools by specific programs to develop soft skills and creative mindset (example through community service);
    c) Embed entrepreneurship in higher education curriculum.
    d) Introduce civic education from primary school level.
- Continuing to emphasize Arts, Culture and Humanities, which remain just as important to empowering citizens to drive the continent's digital transformation, as the current emphasis on STEM;
- Establish and support internship programs within start-ups to close the industry skills gap - role models may have considerable impact for young people and should provide an image of an ambitious yet realistic goal.

Diversity and Inclusion

- Encouraging diversity and inclusion in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM) education, particularly supporting marginalized groups such as women, people living with disabilities and rural communities.

Building Partnerships

- Establishing partnerships between government labs, universities, regulatory bodies, innovation bodies and the private sector.

Intellectual Property Protection

- Supporting Intellectual Property Rights acquisition;

Collaboration

- Supporting multidisciplinary research;
- Supporting knowledge transfer through: (i) exchange programs between hubs and research centres (for example establishing pan-african talent visa for highly skilled for Researchers, innovators, and startups.) ; (ii) incentivising diaspora to set up research labs locally and (iii) incentivising mentorship/role model programs (for example entrepreneurs participating in the program could benefit from some advantages related to tax).

Infrastructure Development and Sharing

- Incentivizing the private sector to develop digital infrastructure, such as internet, hardware and digital facilities for social development;
- Infrastructure and resource sharing to manage the challenge of the cost of teaching and learning materials. It is important to maximize the use of limited resources through strategic sharing of these resources between hubs, schools and universities.

Access to technology platforms and tools

- Activating a national and pan-African sharing platform to develop national strategies, advise and inform governments;
- Promoting the creation and adoption of pan-African virtual and open learning platforms (e.g MOOCs), through partnerships, for ease of access, affordability and increased reach
- Promote digital and business skills training programs targeting policy makers as well as start-ups and SMEs through innovation hubs.

Market Creation

- Establishing feasible innovation channels for the market contexts;
- Supporting innovation by making the government a first customer through competitions to address challenges in public institutions/bodies.
- Making available public data for research purposes and for validating systems and products.

Standards

- Establish research assessment frameworks and allocate funds according to quality of research output.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY PUBLIC SPACES

Multidisciplinary public spaces are spaces hosting communities of value-driven people, which provide services to public administrations, entrepreneurs and / or large enterprises, and act as catalysts for innovation to thrive.

We propose:

- Governments to partner with credible and trusted, local, grassroots and community-based groups and organizations, such as hubs and labs in the management of the activities or the multidisciplinary space.
- Partners should be involved in the design, redesign or co-design of civic spaces such as libraries, parks, museums, performing arts venues and business incubators, from conceptualization so both partners will recognize the value that they each bring and there will be transparency on the win-win value created.
- Governments should invest in public spaces, and remove restrictions for diverse citizens to gather and discuss socially and commercially relevant issues and co-design solutions.
- Governments should promote public spaces as a way to attract more individuals or groups who want to engage in social and economic development.

- Governments should create a registry of all state owned spaces, including spaces that are under-utilized and unutilized and should make these spaces available for community-based groups.

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS

Ease of Doing Business Is the process to simplify the accessibility and usage of resources that enables the environment for a business to exist and thrive in ones economy and to exchange value that improves people's lives and African economies. Putting in place measures to ensure that setting up, operating and closing a business is made easier, to unlock the potential of citizens to provide new business solutions and services that will foster the creation and formalization of more businesses.

We propose government to ease the process of doing business by:

- Eliminating minimum capital requirements to register a business.
- Reducing registration fees. `
- Having a digitized process|platform for registration, operation and closure of businesses.
- Providing temporary licenses for testing phase to businesses depending on the sector regulations they operating in, for a specified time.
- Licensing of businesses based on their operational capacity that can be easily upgraded.
- Clearly defining sectoral operating requirements for businesses.

- Ease Insolvency for business in their early stages by providing a clear and up-front insolvency information during business registration phase.
- Encouraging voluntary insolvency by minimizing the insolvency penalties and providing other options based on the stage and operational size of businesses
- Providing legal aid that addresses insolvency to businesses in early stages
- Providing clear information on taxation options and placing smart taxation mechanisms
- Incentivizing financial institutions to provide startups and SMEs friendly products that take into account maintenance fee, credit accessibility thought finding new forms credit scoring

FINANCE FOR INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Governments, Supporters (NGO's, Corporates, multinationals, financial institutions, investors, and innovation hubs) and Entrepreneurs have an important role to play in addressing the financial challenges impeding innovation. Governments must work to reduce uncertainty and risks associated with financing innovators and entrepreneurs. All stakeholders must collaborate in the policy creation process to ensure all common concerns are being addressed. We recommend to use a triple stakeholder partnership model that include Governments, Supporters, Entrepreneurs

Governments (G):

- Establish incentives for angel investors, private equity, venture capital, corporates and traditional financial institutions to expand working capital and investment capital for startups.
- Establish funding mechanisms for the community innovation hubs.
- Establish innovation-for-procurement mechanisms, and to otherwise ease access for entrepreneurs and innovation hubs to public tenders.

Supporters (S):

- We encourage corporates to invest in early-stage enterprise acceleration through open innovation.
- We recommend lower interest rates for entrepreneurs.
- We recommend incentives, training and additional support for angel investors to unlock funding for seed stage and pre-seed stage startups in product development phase.
- we encourage funders to broaden M&E metrics to assess and prioritise impact.
- We recommend that funders are encouraged to create shorter and simpler exit strategies, as compared to the existing ones.

Entrepreneurs (E):

- we recommend support for organizations and institutions that provide financial training and mentoring to entrepreneurs, such as community innovation hubs. It is important that entrepreneurs have clear and precise information to access grants, venture capital, private equity funds, loans and government innovation and SME funds.
- we encourage tracking and reporting of innovation and entrepreneurship fundraising to encourage sharing of success stories and best practice.

We propose :

1. **A National Platform**

Creation of a one stop shop sharing frequently updated information about:

- News on Administration and legislation (government)
- Training and mentorship opportunities (supporters, government)
- Grants and finance opportunities (supporters, government)
- Application for Entrepreneurship Risk Licence (government, supporters)

2. **Entrepreneurship Development**

This licence is a collaboration effort between the stakeholders to provide innovators and Entrepreneurs comprehensive training on financial management

Advantages for :

- Entrepreneurs: when applying for finance with this license, should give them access to investor-matchmaking service providers
- Supporters: this ensures to investors that entrepreneurs are risk averse
- Government : strengthens the stability of the business environment

3. **Incentive package**

- Supporters: Incentives include but not limited to tax reduction or tax credit and subsidies.

Overall, we believe it is the responsibility of governments to provide a sustainable and friendly environment to encourage investments.

LOCAL AND PAN-AFRICAN CULTURES, PRODUCTS AND MARKETS

(FINISH INTRODUCTION)

Our local cultures, products and markets need to be promoted, protected and empowered.

We propose:

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Unified African Market

In order to realize a unified African market, we recommend:

- Adoption and ratification of the African Continental Free Trade Agreement to facilitate free mobility of people, goods and services.
- Creation of a single digital market, facilitating digital integration through the removal of roaming charges and other barriers for digital trade and financial transactions.
- Increasing access to vital information, such as national and cross-border regulatory compliance by for instance publishing them online
- Removing non-tariff barriers on intra-African trade
- Easing mobility of people through the creation of an African Passport
- Co-creating a standard set of guidelines for the branding of African products
- Establishing clear transparently-enforced investment laws

Promotion and protection of cultures products and technical know-how

We also believe that our cultures, products and technical know-how should be valued and protected. We recommend that the policy makers go about this by:

- Encouraging the consumption of local products at a national and continental level through for instance awareness campaigns
- Giving priority to national and continental products and services in public procurements
- Creating a certification and a legal protection for Made in Africa products

Empowerment and support of local producers

We finally believe that our local SMEs, entrepreneurs, creatives and innovators should be empowered and supported by every means. We recommend that the policy makers go about this by:

- Creating an innovative environment (enabling in the sense that there are no financial, cross border or policy barriers.) for them to thrive (grow, and expand on a pan-African level)
- Promoting and supporting the transforming and manufacturing of local products
- Promoting exchange of knowledge amongst stakeholders at a continental level
- Increase the competitiveness of local companies with international brands and products through subsidies, protection or incentives when necessary
- Governments should adopt public procurement for innovation processes.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

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Intellectual Property Rights processes are costly and time consuming, lacking readability and enforcement. Registration of brands, industrial inventions and trademarks take up to a year or more for some countries, whilst government enforcement agencies are lax on counterfeiters and infringers of Intellectual Property Rights.

We believe open source standards built on the principles of openness, transparency and consensus lay the grounds for innovation, growth and fair competition.

We propose that:

- The African Union adopt a joint Intellectual Policy that drives innovation with high standards of ethics and fairness in competition, in particular to protect indigenous innovators and their products.
- All African governments to have a roadmap to improve, adopt and enforce a unified IP regime, African Organization of Intellectual Property (OAPI).
- Intellectual Property regimes must simplify registration and reduce the cost associated with it.
- Public funds from African governments should be spent only on public code (Open source software) or indeginous code (software developed by African developers), and takes into consideration the long-term maintenance costs of investment.
- Enable tech-based businesses to have access to relevant open data.
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We recommend in particular :

- the capability building within the government to make the best use of open source solutions, and the open recruitment of technology professionals into government in order to establish skills and cultures for a more open challenge to suppliers about technology solutions ;

  Incorporate open data
  Incorporate data privacy
  Support change-management capacity within Governments (government recruitment of innovation professionals)
  African Declaration of Internet Rights and Freedoms

TAXATION SYSTEM

Recognizing that current tax regimes and administration are not conducive to innovation and business growth across the continent, we recommend a simplified digital tax registration and filing system under a government one-stop shop through e-filing and e-tax procedures.

We believe that it is important to levy taxes based on the stage of the business, ranging from ideation to growth stage. This will stimulate innovation, the emergence of new industries, and R&D to increase socio-economic development.

We propose that :

- Innovative companies should receive tax incentives, rebates, holidays and other forms of relief for investments, imports, hiring and capital gains tax.
- Governments to implement proactive tax information campaigns to ensure adequate awareness and compliance amongst taxpayers.
- Penalties and fines should be designed to encourage and incentivize compliance, not to destroy business growth in the face of overwhelming compliance costs.
- This means that new enterprises and SME's should have lower penalties. Furthermore, governments should explore alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, such as amnesty from penalties, staggered payment options for defaulters and rapid access facilities for arbitration. This would improve sustainability of businesses, re-startup and persistent innovation.

We encourage governments to provide tax incentives for employing youth. Internship stipends must be tax exempt for university students, and companies can receive a payroll tax holidays for hiring first-time employees and other disadvantaged groups. Finally, we encourage African governments to treat all African startups as indigenous startups.

We innovation community leaders stand ready to work together with governments, regional bodies, civil society, our peers in the i4policy Alliance and other partners to implement these recommendations.