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Statement submitted by Self-Help Development Facilitators, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Issues

The era when natural resource endowments determined greatness has given way to an era in which knowledge and technological innovations are paramount. Today, education and skills, an entrepreneurial environment and information and communications infrastructures anchored upon home-grown innovations constitute the critical success factors for national development.

The current preoccupation with preparing for examinations and acquiring certificates has left no room for creativity, initiative, critical thinking and problem solving among most Nigerians.

Progress in innovation remains irregular in Nigeria because of the culture's low tolerance for appraisal and constructive criticism, its strong belief in magic, a poor concept of time, an ambivalent and docile attitude to sociopolitical and technological changes, an inferiority complex and a lack of political will.

Technological innovation for national development will continue to be problematic in Nigeria if it is not anchored to the implementation of rules to ensure consistency with the national culture, that is, the set of structured, silent but powerful patterns of beliefs, behaviours and relationships (roles) that are entrenched and guided by invisible social values, regulated by norms of conduct (rules) and operationalized by the public and private sectors (institutions).

Action agenda

Today, technological innovation constitutes a major factor in powering growth, competitiveness, national development and the socioeconomic well-being of citizens. Thus, it has become a key national policy priority to create an environment conducive to innovative initiatives. It will require a new leadership and governance architecture, anchored in strong political will and an engaged citizenry. This entails:

- (a) Reappraising and reformulating a home-grown governance and innovation architecture, primarily involving Nigerians themselves;
- (b) Adopting a holistic governance approach to innovation by creating the conditions, incentives and mechanisms for removing obstacles to creativity;
- (c) Practising a learn-and-adapt strategy as the new paradigm for unleashing Nigeria's technological emancipation;
- (d) Positive and sustainable cross-country innovation spillovers, which are achievable through stronger regional collaboration, for example through the Economic Community of West African States;
- (e) The right political leadership and will, using experts in Nigeria and in the diaspora to foster innovation at home to constitute a driving force behind Nigeria's knowledge economy and national rebirth;
- (f) Balancing technical and behavioural innovation-related systems and processes;

(g) Fostering mutual learning and regularly adapting and benchmarking Nigeria's innovation system against global best practices, and engaging in win-win partnerships;

(h) Introducing socially and culturally sensitive technology-based courses at all levels of learning in the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions;

(i) Studying, modifying, implementing and strategically adapting what works in technologically advanced countries to the Nigerian socioeconomic, cultural and political realities;

(j) Enhancing collaboration with local communities, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations to build partnerships with donor agencies and other countries for the promotion of science, technology and cultural institutions and innovations;

(k) Putting in place monitoring and evaluation strategies to ensure compliance with agreed policies, framework and interventions;

(l) Ensuring that government, at all levels, recommits to meaningful action rather than pay lip service to this national socioeconomic transformation challenge.
