

# COMMUNIQUE

## “Building a Sustainable and Resilient African Bioeconomy”

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Eastern Africa Bioeconomy Conference, held on 10 and 11 November 2021, and co-organised by the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (*icipe*)/BioInnovate Africa, in partnership with the East African Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)-Africa Centre, and Biosciences eastern and central Africa-International Livestock Research Institute (BecA-ILRI) Hub.

### PREAMBLE

**RECALLING** the 1<sup>st</sup> Eastern African Bioeconomy Conference, held from 21 – 22 October 2020, in which the participants adopted a Regional Bioeconomy Strategy and launched an Eastern Africa Bioeconomy Observatory portal to serve as a knowledge repository and enable monitoring of advances in bioeconomy in the region;

**CONSIDERING** the background of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Eastern African Bioeconomy Conference – that of a continent which, alongside the rest of the world, aims to deal with an array of existing and emerging challenges, such as reducing carbon emissions, producing healthier foods, developing safer and more efficacious medicines, providing clean energy and water among others;

**ALSO CONSIDERING** renewed impetus for a bioeconomy due to the need to accelerate attainment of the sustainable development goals (SDGs), and to achieve a transformative recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic; and that these two interlinked agendas stipulate the need to strengthen health systems, reshape food systems to withstand shocks and serve people and the Planet better; diversify incomes and economies to safeguard livelihoods; and generate massive, diverse, lucrative and inclusive opportunities, with the most vulnerable at the centre.

**ACKNOWLEDGING** Africa’s advantages in the development of a competitive and sustainable bioeconomy due to the continent’s rich biological resources, and relatively large proportion of arable land; and the opportunities these factors create for the continent to innovate around, and add value to its primary production especially in agriculture, the backbone of most economies in the region, and also in sectors like aquaculture, forestry, health and industry;

**RECOGNISING** that a sustainable and resilient bioeconomy should aim to (1) promote and ensure food security (2) secure biodiversity (3) be inclusive by encompassing various sections of the community like youth, women, consumers, producers, entrepreneurs, policy and decision makers (4) embrace the three pillars of economic growth, biodiversity and environmental protection and social inclusion, while avoiding potential trade-offs between them (5) extend through entire value chains;

**FURTHER RECOGNISING** that Africa has the youngest population in the world, and that the development of a bioeconomy could contribute to turning this “youth bulge” into a demographic dividend.

**UNDERSCORING** the central role of science, technology and innovation in advancing a bioeconomy to (1) elevate understanding, preservation and maintenance of healthy ecosystems and (2) meet the requirement for Africa to generate knowledge that is specific to the continent’s bioeconomy needs, in convergence with the aspirations, lifestyles and developmental goals;

**COGNIZANT** of challenges and risks in the development of a bioeconomy including (1) inadequate investments and access to capital (2) weak pivotal structures such as policies and institutions (3) non-tariff barriers, (4) long bureaucratic processes, (5) weak capacity at individual, institutional and systemic levels and (6) limited access to markets;

## THE CONFERENCE COLLECTIVELY:

**ENDORSED** the development of a sustainable and resilient bioeconomy as a long-term strategy for Africa to reduce poverty, create jobs, enhance economic development, reduce the impacts of climate change through mitigation and adaptation measures, and promote food and nutritional security. Further, bioeconomy development should include aspects such as value addition on raw products, use of agricultural and forestry residues and other alternative crops and microorganisms, including marine and aquatic resources, which form a significant part of the blue economy.

**COMMENDED** the efforts of the eastern Africa community in pioneering the development of a bioeconomy roadmap in Africa, evidenced by the completion of a regional bioeconomy strategy, partnerships among stakeholders and the evolution of the region's annual bioeconomy conference as one of the largest convenings on bioeconomy in the continent.

**WELCOMED** examples from Africa and across the world that demonstrate growing political will, openness and willingness by policy and decisionmakers to support innovative biobased ideas that create new business prospects.

**ALSO WELCOMED** illustrations of bio-based innovations that show potential of a bioeconomy to broaden economic growth, and link production to new markets, while improving lives in the continent.

**RECOMMENDED** the need for **awareness creation and policy advocacy**, targeting relevant stakeholders in the bioeconomy value chain, backed by research-based evidence to address the disconnect in demand and supply of bio-based products, by promoting available bioeconomy opportunities, and influencing consumer preferences and behaviour with respect to bio-based products.

**ALSO RECOMMENDED** the development of **regulatory and institutional frameworks** to facilitate various aspects of the bioeconomy such as (1) intellectual property rights in technology development (2) vibrant public-private partnership, linking entrepreneurship, science and societal aspirations for sustainable green growth (3) standards harmonisation for biobased product development including sanitary and phytosanitary measures and (4) open skies and movement of people and goods across the borders.

**ENDORSED holistic and inclusive strategies** that (1) facilitate participation of women, smallscale farmers, people with disabilities and young people, among others, in bioeconomy development (2) provide incentives to motivate young entrepreneurs and scientists to generate bio-based ideas and innovations (3) develop investment support packages, including affordable financing mechanisms (4) facilitate collaboration through regional centres, clusters and hub for bioscience research and innovation and (5) promote biobased business incubation, and policy think tanks that provide multisectoral perspective on the support required for sustainable and green enterprises (6) promote an increased access to regional and global markets including development of regional biobased value chains.

**RECOMMENDED** special attention and support to the youth, not as a passive demography, but as a key cog in the advancement to a bioeconomy in Africa, due to their technological ability and growing desire and knack to lead socio-economic change in the continent.

**RECOMMENDED training and capacity building** for small and mid-size enterprises (SMEs) on trade information, sustainable and green business skills and for the development of a symbiotic relationship among them and government, academia and private sector.

**ENDORSED** the need for a **new way of thinking and conducting research**, including transdisciplinary approaches that bring together disciplines and fields like biotechnology, and related physical, engineering, medical and chemical sciences, computing and bioinformatics, business, law and the social sciences.

**ENDORSED** the imperative for **member countries to domesticate the eastern Africa bioeconomy strategy**, to address local challenges, contribute to national priorities and maximally harness the potential of bioeconomy in socio-economic transformation.

**ENDORSED** the need to **capitalise on innovative green enterprises** that have been developed because of the COVID 19 pandemic and lessons learnt, including Africa's ability to use bioeconomy as one of the ways to withstand or mitigate the impact of the pandemic and future disease outbreaks.

**ENDORSED** the need for **productive and effective partnerships** that are mutually owned, and which facilitate collaboration within the region, across the continent and internationally, through the Global Bioeconomy Summit.

**WELCOMED regional collaboration** to maximise access to financial resources and infrastructure for the development of an African bioeconomy, including extending deliberations from the present conference and bioeconomy advances in eastern Africa, including development of relevant strategies, to other regions of the continent.

**RECOMMENDED** increased collaboration among other regional economic communities (RECs), supported by the pan-African institutions: African Union (AU), United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the African Development Bank (AfDB); for mutual learning and harmonisation of bioeconomy policies and strategies at continental level.