



COMMUNIQUE

HIGH LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE ON BIOECONOMY IN BURUNDI AND EAST AFRICA

“NATIONAL BIOECONOMY STRATEGIES: PAVING THE FUTURE GROWTH PATH FOR BURUNDI AND EAST AFRICA”

1.0 Background

This communiqué is issued on the occasion of the high-level policy dialogue on “*National Bioeconomy Strategies: Paving the Future Growth Path for Burundi and East Africa*”, held on October 17th 2023, and co-organised by the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe)/BioInnovate Africa, the East African Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI)-Africa Centre, and in collaboration with the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, Republic of Burundi through the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NCSTI).

The policy dialogue aimed at advancing the collective efforts to shape a joint understanding of the importance of the bioeconomy for future economic growth in Burundi and East Africa. The dialogue constituted an important milestone in the process of nationalising the East African regional bioeconomy strategy. It brought together stakeholders in and outside Burundi comprising key public and private bioeconomy stakeholders in Burundi, members of the BioInnovate Africa Programme Advisory Committee, regional bioeconomy experts and project partners in Burundi supported by icipe/BioInnovate Africa.

A high-level policy dialogue such as this supports member countries’ effort to develop national bioeconomy strategies, and reflects a continuous commitment to fostering collaboration, innovation, and shared bioeconomy visions across East African nations. The policy dialogue discussed bioeconomy in action in Burundi and the East Africa, and specifically made a special emphasis on the roadmap for bioeconomy strategy development in Burundi. The importance of domesticizing bioeconomy strategies, the sharing of experiences and best practices as well as the discussion of required steps for Burundi’s bioeconomy strategy development were at the heart of the discussions. EASTECO made a commitment to continue supporting Burundi’s effort as it nationalise the regional Bioeconomy strategy.

2.0 Main Themes Explored

- > **Building on the East African Regional Bioeconomy Strategy: Promote the development of national bioeconomy strategies and early implementation for catalyzing sustainable economic growth.**

The introduction of the East African Regional Bioeconomy Strategy, officially announced by the Secretary General of the East African Community in December 2022, represents a significant stride toward unleashing the region's bioeconomy potential. The strategy's core objectives are to support rural and urban livelihoods and creation of new jobs, the environment, health, and food and nutrition security.

For the region to achieve its objectives and to maximize benefits, nations are encouraged to formulate individual national strategies. Those that prioritize early implementation are likely to reap its rewards early and align themselves with other countries investing in the bioeconomy. The development of a



bioeconomy in East Africa, though still in its early stages, offers opportunities for the region to leverage its biological resources as a catalyst for sustainable economic growth. It will support regulatory and policy developments, create more investment opportunities in research and development, and enhance industrial and biomanufacturing capacity of the region. The bioeconomy further plays a crucial role in mitigating climate change, adapting to its impacts, and conserving biodiversity.

Several members states like Rwanda and Uganda, and regional partners like Ethiopia, have started the process of nationalizing the regional bioeconomy strategy. This policy dialogue demonstrated Burundi's interest in having its national bioeconomy strategy, and called for the mobilization of resources to for this purpose. A dedicated bioeconomy strategy for Burundi will go a long way in supporting already ongoing bioeconomy projects in country such as rhizobia-mycorrhizae-based biofertilizer for improved food production, providing biodegradable alternatives (carrier bags from banana fibre), and improved health (nano encapsulated bromelain and artemisinin based combination therapy) as well as novel plant based compounds for controlling malaria transmitting mosquito vectors.

- > **Building on the Burundi Vision 2060: Develop a bioeconomy strategy and foster its implementation in line with the “Burundi Vision Emerging Country 2040, Developed Country 2060”.**

The development of a national bioeconomy strategy for Burundi is perfectly aligned with the nations vision of *“Burundi Vision Emerging Country 2040, Developed Country 2060”*. The vision encompasses five pivotal pillars for achieving the ultimate goals of improving living conditions/well-being and reducing inequalities, namely: commitment by the state, economic efficiency, social equity sustainable ecology and heritage, and fruitful partnerships. To realize this vision of emergence by 2040, Burundi has set forth a comprehensive roadmap consisting of 21 strategic objectives distributed across these five pillars. Significantly, half of these objectives—50%—are interwoven with the bioeconomy sector. This integration underscores the vital role of bioeconomy in shaping the nation's progress.

3.0 Call to Action

- 1. Domesticating the eastern Africa bioeconomy strategy.** A call for Burundi to develop a national bioeconomy strategy closely aligned with the *“Burundi Vision Emerging Country 2040, Developed Country 2060”*. Further, a call for the harmonization of efforts with the East African regional bioeconomy strategy and the broader East African development agenda. A detailed action plan, policy agenda and roadmap are crucial to translate high-level goals into practical actions, allocate resources effectively, measure progress, engage stakeholders, adapt to changing circumstances, and ensure transparency and accountability throughout the implementation process.
- 2. Awareness creation and policy advocacy.** Stress the need to raise public awareness and do policy advocacy about the bioeconomy's potential and benefits across public and private stakeholders in Burundi. Increasing stakeholder awareness and acceptance of bio-innovations and empowering the citizens to participate in and take up bioeconomy opportunities is key to unlock its full potential but also to promote sustainable development, environmental stewardship, economic growth, and social inclusion.
- 3. Development and strengthening of regulatory and institutional frameworks.** A call for the promotion of a conducive institutional and regulatory bioeconomy framework in Burundi. Focus areas shall include regulations on intellectual property rights that promote bio-innovations, and public-



private partnership, linking entrepreneurship, science and societal aspirations for sustainable green growth. Within the East African context, the support of standards harmonisation for biobased product development including sanitary and phytosanitary measures and the creation of enabling conditions for export to meet quality and regulatory requirements to access new markets, facilitating trade and economies of scale will be important.

4. **Partnerships and collaborative implementation.** A call upon the government, academia, industry, and civil society in Burundi to actively contribute to the development of Burundi's bioeconomy strategy and jointly work on its implementation. An encouragement to promote private sector engagement and partnerships fostering investments that contribute to job creation, economic growth, and sustainable development. Further, a call for international cooperation, inviting global partners, organizations, and experts to collaborate with Burundi and East Africa in knowledge exchange, technical assistance, and funding opportunities for bioeconomy advancement.
5. **Youth focus.** A call on all actors in Burundi to actively promote and support the youth as key drivers in the advancement to a bioeconomy in Africa. The *"Burundi Vision Emerging Country 2040, Developed Country 2060"* mentions the youth as one of the country's key strengths to capitalize on for accelerating the country's growth path. Educational institutions and governments shall actively involve youth in bioeconomy-related initiatives, encouraging their participation in research, entrepreneurship, and innovative ventures to drive future growth.
6. **Education, training and capacity building.** A call for the establishment and improvement of training programs and capacity-building initiatives to empower youth, women, researchers, government officials, SMEs and entrepreneurs with the skills needed to effectively participate in and contribute to the bioeconomy. These shall include but are not limited to activities that build up know-how in entrepreneurship, promote transdisciplinary research, support R&D institutions and related arrangements, develop up-to-date curricula in modern biosciences and related technologies, strengthen capacity building in bioprocess engineering and valorisation of primary produce and support technology transfer offices in universities and research institutes.

Done at Bujumbura, on 17th October 2023

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