



**149th General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)
Geneva, Switzerland, 13-17 October 2024**

**General Debate Theme: Harnessing Science, Technology and Innovation
(STI) for a more peaceful and sustainable future**

MR. PRESIDENT, YOUR EXCELLENCIES, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

1. It is a great honour to be with you to represent and express the voice of the Parliament of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) at the 149th General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The IPU General Assembly has always provided a platform for delegates to deliberate, exchange views and galvanize parliamentary action. That is why the ECOWAS Parliament finds it very meaningful to participate and share experiences with the illustrious representatives of the national and regional parliaments invited to this important meeting.
2. In so doing, permit me to express the warm fraternal greetings of the Rt. Honorable Speaker, Hadja Memounatou Ibrahima and Parliamentarians of the ECOWAS Parliament, as well as my best wishes for the success of these meetings.

MR. PRESIDENT, YOUR EXCELLENCIES

3. As the world looks towards addressing the greater problems of poverty, hunger, health, employment, the environment and energy, there could not have been a better theme for this General Assembly than the one we are addressing. The use of science, technology and innovation are critical

to achieving our Sustainable Development Goals and overcoming long standing challenges. In fact, science, technology and innovation have been recognized as key determinants of Sustainable Development and attainment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations.

4. Our world is in dire need of advances in medical technology and development of new vaccines, treatments, and diagnostic tools, that would significantly be improving health outcomes and life expectancy. The need for environmental sustainability, vis a vis innovations in renewable energy, waste management, and conservation technologies to address environmental challenges such as climate change and resource depletion remain high on the global agenda. Furthermore, we are observing the revolutionization of education and commerce through online platforms, making education and business more accessible and inclusive and facilitating knowledge exchange and global collaboration.
5. Unfortunately, while we are observing growing interest in STI marked by technical cooperation and investment promotion activities among stakeholders that lead to economic transformation in parts of the world, this is not the case in most parts, especially underdeveloped and developing countries.
6. In the ECOWAS region, for example, the agriculture sector is suffering from underinvestment and other underdeveloped areas include water, sanitation and electricity sectors, which hold potential for public– private partnerships. Apart from obvious factors like underinvestment, this situation has resulted from the relatively low political commitment to science, technology and innovation on the part of individual countries.
7. The lack of national research and innovation strategies or policies with a clear definition of measurable targets and the role to be played by each stakeholder; the lack of involvement by private companies in the process

of defining national research needs, priorities and programmes; and the lack of institutions devoted to innovation that can make the link between research and development, are some of the reasons to account for the region's low science, technology and innovation development.

8. As ECOWAS is looking towards making the region an economic power in Africa and make optimal use of the vast human potentials and natural resources to improve the well-being of the citizens, we believe that it is necessary for the region to maximize on STI. We have recognized the integration of STI into all socio-economic activities, with its numerous uses in commerce, administration, health, agriculture and education. We are further aware that with our generally low levels of science and technological expertise, which is compounded by the imbalance between men and women in the field of science and technology, adding STI policies to national and regional policy frameworks would be a viable mechanism to harness its benefits. In so doing, the ECOWAS Vision 2050 has provided a sustainable development path to achieving these goals.
9. Furthermore, harnessing Science, Technology and Innovation would require public private partnership to be more responsive to the changing nature of innovation and to social and global challenges. Public-Private Partnership would also provide solutions to the development challenges of our world and significantly contribute to creating decent jobs, driving education and stimulate competitiveness and innovation. By effectively combining the strengths of both sectors, PPPs can create a dynamic environment that fosters innovation and drives progress in science and technology.
10. As I conclude, I wish to emphasize that as we look towards achieving Sustainable Development, peace and global security, Science, Technology, Innovation is essential to create a more equitable and peaceful world. By tackling issues like poverty, inequality, and lack of access to education, STI can help mitigate the underlying factors that often lead to conflict.

11. Finally, I would like to express, once again, my gratitude to the President of the IPU for the outstanding collaboration with the ECOWAS Parliament and extend best wishes for a successful General Assembly. Long live the IPU that honours the interests of the peoples of the world! Long live cooperation and active solidarity.

12. Thank you!