
Editorial

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The papers contained in this special are revised versions of chapters that were first published by The Smith Institute in a volume entitled, *Going for Growth: Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa*. We are grateful to The Smith Institute for granting us permission to use the original essays, which can be downloaded from <http://www.smith-institute.org.uk/pdfs/Going_for_Growth.pdf>.

The dawn of the new millennium has offered humanity the opportunity to reflect on major global issues. The adoption of the UN Millennium Declaration in 2000 marked the beginning of a re-examination of international development cooperation, the most elaborate outcome of which is reflected in *Our Common Interest*, the report of the Commission for Africa, chaired by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair.

One of the central messages of the papers is its emphasis on building Africa's capacity to solve its own problems. This focus is reflected in the stress placed on economic growth as a critical basis for addressing poverty. This collection of papers seeks to elaborate on this theme by underscoring the role of science, technology and innovation in development in general, and in international cooperation in particular. The papers signal the growing interest in making the transition from short-term, relief-based activities to long-term development, based on building competence at all levels of science.

While *Our Common Interest* outlines a strong conceptual framework for integrating technological innovation into sustainable development strategies, the papers of this issue present a range of practical options for bringing science, technology and innovation to bear on development. They build on the findings contained in *Innovation: Applying Knowledge to Development*, which was prepared under the auspices of the UN Millennium Project and presented to the Secretary-General in early 2005.

They emphasise the importance of building technical competence; modernising infrastructure as a foundation for technological development; renewing agriculture; stimulating business development and partnerships; energising civil society organisations; and improving the policy environment to promote economic growth through systematic science and technology support.

The range of options laid out call for bold actions among donor and recipient countries alike. They emphasise the importance of aligning government structures with development-oriented technological imperatives. But more importantly, they focus on raising Africa's technical competence, in order to facilitate problem solving.

They acknowledge the importance of experimentation, learning and risk taking. But they also call for measures that reduce the uncertainties associated with development, underwrite the risks of venturing into new fields and reinforce the use of lessons learned from development projects. In other words, the papers treat economic transformation as a learning process associated with continuous improvement, and make a plea for innovation in both the technological and social fields.