

ALL PARTNERS FORUM 2026: DAILY BRIEF

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Day 3 (30 September 2026): Policy Commitments for Lasting Investment

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How can science granting councils turn policy commitments into sustained investment in research and innovation?

This question ran through Day 3 of the SGCI All Partners Forum 2026, the Policy Day.

Councils, funders and partners examined how councils can use their funding, evidence and partnerships to address national development priorities while contributing to STISA-2034.

The day also marked a significant moment for SGCI. For the first time in the Initiative's history, a sitting Prime Minister attended the Forum. Namibia's Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Dr Tjitunga Elijah Ngurare, officially opened the Forum, accompanied by three ministers, an unprecedented level of high-level political representation at an SGCI meeting.

His message set the tone for the discussions that followed. While calling for greater recognition, support and facilitation of scientists, he stressed that research must respond to society's needs, improve people's lives and connect with government policy priorities.

"Evidence must find its way into government decisions, business practices and community solutions," he said.

"Research, science, technology and innovation are not abstract concepts. They are instruments through which we can improve lives, create opportunities for young people, and strengthen our economies."

His remarks resonated throughout the day, as speakers repeatedly returned to the gap between policy commitments and the resources and institutional arrangements needed to translate them into results.

Dr Nhlanhla Lupahla, General Manager for RSTI Coordination and Support at Namibia's National Commission on Research, Science and Technology, said SGCI-3 would extend the Initiative's work from institutional capacity building towards systems change and partnership-driven interventions. Hosting the Forum 11 years after joining SGCI, he said, allowed Namibia to help shape priorities and partnerships for the next phase.



Namibia's Prime Minister, Rt Hon. Dr Tjitunga Elijah Ngurare, officially opens the #SGCI All Partners Forum 2026.

Dr Cephas Adjei Mensah, outgoing President of the SGCI Alliance, encouraged councils, funders and partners to develop solutions together, guided by the contexts in which those solutions will be used. He stressed that a shared vision must be backed by arrangements that allow councils to work collectively and own implementation.

The Forum is attended by delegates from 39 countries, 27 of which are African. These include 20 SGCI member countries and five other countries that are in the process of becoming SGCI members.

In his address, Prime Minister Ngurare also called for recognition of the scientific capability that Africa already has. He urged development partners to recognise that investing in science in Africa also serves their own needs. He described Africa's people as its greatest asset, noting that young people make up more than 70 per cent of the population.

Dr Chioma Okeke, a special assistant to Nigeria's Federal Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology, said councils must show how STI investment can address challenges such as food security, health and unemployment. Nigeria, she said, was in the final stages of establishing a national science council.

She cited the country's ECON (Energize Commercialisation Now) and YSI initiatives as examples of how science and technology can transform communities when backed by political support.

Dr Mahaman Bachir Saley, Head of Science Technology and Space Division at the African Union Commission, described SGCI as a very useful platform for implementing STISA-2034. He stressed the need for member-state financing commitments, linked to the African Union target of allocating 1 per cent of GDP to R&D.

Daan du Toit, Deputy Director-General (International Cooperation and Resources) at South Africa's Department of Science and Innovation, urged councils to take the investment case to finance ministers and other decision-makers, linking it to Agenda 2063. He also called for greater private-sector participation and cautioned that reliance on external support creates vulnerabilities in the current geopolitical environment.

Discussions on research infrastructure focused on how countries and institutions could make better use of existing facilities before investing in new ones. Participants called for partnerships that would enable institutions to share equipment, expertise and other resources.

They also highlighted the need to address practical issues such as researcher mobility, intellectual property, data sovereignty and the cost of operating shared facilities. Building trust between collaborating institutions was seen as essential.

Practical proposals included registries showing where equipment and expertise are available, drawing on information held by the Association of African Universities. Participants also discussed fee-for-service arrangements to cover costs and clarify data ownership.

A live poll showed the strongest support for regional research hubs, although no decision was taken. Vaccine platforms were among the areas identified for possible shared investment.

Following the discussion on research infrastructure, attention turned to strengthening councils' leadership and policy influence. The session explored how the SGCI Policy Hub can better support councils to generate and use data and evidence for policymaking and decision-making, and to mobilise public investment in STI in line with STISA-2034.

Dr Cephas Mensah, outgoing President of SGCI, said that under SGCI-3, the emphasis would be on institutionalising the use of evidence, supporting policy implementation and coordinating assistance to councils, with the Hub serving as a one-stop help desk.

Prof Tom Ogada, Executive Director of the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), said ACTS had supported 12 councils to develop STI policies, four to develop implementation plans and six to conduct pilot impact assessments of completed projects. It had also helped 15 councils convene 40 multi-stakeholder events. Under SGCI-3, ACTS plans to support at least six councils with policy review and alignment, six with Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning frameworks, and 15 with impact assessments.

Maria Stella Namyalo, a Programme Officer with AUDA-NEPAD, said STI is unevenly prioritised across countries and often insufficiently integrated into national budgets and financial plans. Most countries, she noted, still invest less than 1 per cent of their GDP in research and development.

Dr Heide Hackmann of CREST said the organisation planned to expand its database on research funding flows to capture both domestic and international funding.

Participants identified several challenges, including fragmented data, incompatible data formats, weak situation analysis, insufficient funding for data collection and limited capacity to communicate findings.

They proposed regional data-sharing mechanisms and costed policy implementation plans as possible solutions. Councils were also encouraged to submit specific requests for support on policy, evidence and financing through the Policy Hub.

The final session considered Africa's place in the global research ecosystem.

Dr Charah Watson, Executive Director of Jamaica's Scientific Research Council, argued that councils need recognition at home to build credibility abroad, and that communicating their relevance and impact is part of that. Dr Amos Nungu, head of Tanzania's Commission for Science and Technology, called for collective positions and active roles in agenda-setting, backed by strong grants management, transparency and peer review. Prof Agus Haryono, Deputy Chairman for Research and Innovation Facilitation at Indonesia's National Research and Innovation Agency, drew on Southeast Asia's experience to discuss common rules for collaboration, data ownership and shared infrastructure.

Participants explored an African–Caribbean research and innovation link for peer learning, communities of practice and access to specialised facilities. They cautioned that approaches must be adapted to local social and cultural conditions.

Several speakers stressed the importance of timing: African councils, institutions and communities should be involved in shaping partnerships before priorities, calls and budgets are finalised.

Across the day, discussions pointed to a shift from commitment to delivery: financing that outlasts individual projects, evidence that reaches policymakers, shared facilities governed by clear rules, and partnerships that African institutions help design from the start.

These discussions echoed the challenge Prime Minister Ngurare had set at the start of the day: to ensure that investment in research ultimately translates into benefits for society.

"Let us invest in our researchers. Let us build institutions that endure. And, above all, let us ensure that the knowledge we generate makes a difference in the lives of our people," he said.

Proposals such as the consultative platform, common indicators, a business roundtable and the African–Caribbean bridge will now need further development, clear ownership and timelines.

The day ended on a celebratory note with the grand launch of SGCI’s new logo, marking a new identity for the Initiative as it enters its next phase.

Policy Day highlighted the growing role of science granting councils in connecting research with national priorities and ensuring that science delivers tangible benefits for society. Tomorrow, the Forum enters its final and shorter day, focused on learning and reflection, wrapping up the week’s discussions and bringing the 2026 SGCI All Partners Forum to a close.



“The future of Africa can be shaped not only by resources, but also by new knowledge and our ability to turn research into opportunities for our people... Science only has meaning when it improves lives. We should never lose sight of the people our research is meant to help. African research must speak to African realities.”

Hon. Dr Sanet Steenkamp,
Minister of Education, Innovation, Youth, Arts and Culture, Namibia

“Globally, there are about 1,400 researchers on average per one million people. The United States and Europe are far above this global average, with over 4,000 researchers per one million people, and many of these are African. What is driving them from Africa to the USA and Europe? It’s not cash. It’s research infrastructure. The shortage of research infrastructure is driving scientific talent out of Africa. This has to change.”

Prof. Brando Okolo,
Head/Senior Advisor on Science, Technology and Innovation
AUDA–NEPAD

Photo highlights from Day 3 (30th September 2026)





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