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Expert Working Group identify research needs for agriculture and nutrition

5-6 March 2015 – London: the Expert Working Group (EWG) of the EU-Africa High Level Policy Dialogue (HLPD) on STI met for the 3rd time to further develop a roadmap for research in food & nutrition security and sustainable agriculture. The EWG took stock of the recent external consultation and is now finalising the roadmap. This was also the occasion for a first meeting with potential funders.

(contact: Nienke Buisman, DG Research & Innovation – nienke.buisman@ec.europa.eu)

The Square Kilometre Array (SKA) moving ahead

9 March 2015: The SKA Organisation agreed to move forward the final pre-construction phase of SKA, one of the world's most ambitious scientific infrastructure project. SKA1 will consist of 200 parabolic antennas or dishes in Southern Africa and over 100,000 smaller dipole antennas in Australia. Construction should start in 2018 with a budget of €650m. SKA is currently supported by 11 countries and received some early support from the EU. In the meantime, the South African Meerkat project, a precursor of SKA, is on schedule. All the necessary support infrastructure is in place; the installation of the first of the 64 13-metre dishes has begun and is expected to be completed in early 2017. (www.ska.ac.za)

29 April: after some wavering, the decision was taken to permanently locate the headquarters of the SKA at Jodrell Bank near Manchester. (<https://www.skatelescope.org/news/selection-on-ska-headquarters/>).

African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA) formed

10 March 2015 – Dakar: during the African Higher Education Summit, 15 African universities from 8 countries formed an alliance with the aim of strengthening research and post-graduate training in Africa, in order to offer better training opportunities on the continent and so reduce brain drain, improve their competitiveness and jointly tackle Africa's challenges. ARUA is coordinated by Cape Town University.

(contact: Dr Max Price, Vice-chancellor, Cape Town University - max.price@uct.ac.za)

Pan African Virtual University planned

17 March 2015 – Addis Ababa: the task force of the Pan African Virtual University met for the first time to explore the feasibility of such an university to bring higher education to all. Taking into account existing initiatives, such as the African Council for Distance Education and the African Virtual University, the task force is drawing up a conceptual framework and roadmap to present at the AU Summit of June 2015.

(contact: Béatrice Njenga, Head of Education, HRST, AUC – njengab@africa-union.org)

African Academy of Sciences (AAS) targets early- to mid-career African scientists

The AAS' new Affiliates' Programme aims "to stimulate and nurture the spirit of scientific discovery and technological innovation in Africa in order to promote sustainable development in the continent through R&D" by supporting young and early-to-mid career researchers and prepare them for leadership roles. Up to 25 Affiliates will be elected each year. (www.aasciences.org/index.php/130-media-center/325).

EU-AU meeting on exploitation of space technologies for development

20 April 2015 – Brussels: the 6th Space Troika enabled EC and AUC representatives to advance collaboration in the field of space to contribute to Africa's development with a focus on Earth Observation. The meeting reviewed the progress of the GMES & Africa initiative which is to provide sustainable, reliable and timely services on environmental and security issues to the public and to policy makers.

The GMES & Africa roadmap was adopted and it was agreed to convene a stakeholders' workshop to launch the implementation process for (a) Long-Term Management of Natural Resources, (b) Marine and Coastal Areas, (c) Water Resources Management thematic areas under the Pan African Programme.

(For more: www.africa-eu-partnership.org/newsroom/all-news/6th-space-troika-meeting)

High level meeting between EC and AUC discusses research and higher education

22 April 2015 – Brussels: the European Commission and African Union Commission met for the 7th time to advance the Partnership embodied by the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES). Many areas were addressed including research and innovation. The progress of the HLPD towards a jointly funded EU-Africa Research and Innovation Partnership with a focus on food and nutrition security and sustainable agriculture was welcomed and it was agreed to mobilise adequate resources for its implementation. The need for better preparedness for infectious diseases through research and surveillance, such as through the Global Research Collaboration for Infectious Disease Preparedness (GloPID), the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) and the emerging African Centre for Disease Control (ACDC) was recognised. It was agreed to continue to support the Harmonisation of African Higher Education, in particular through the Tuning initiative (see next item), "to cooperate in the development of centres of excellence under the Pan African University (PAU), notably the establishment of the PAU Institute for Space Sciences in South Africa", and to encourage the mobility of students and academic staff, both within Africa and between the continents. (www.africa-eu-partnership.org/newsroom/all-news/)

Call for participation: Harmonisation and Tuning Phase II

27 April 2015 – Brussels: the AUC and the EU are launching a call for participation in the 2nd phase of the Harmonisation and Tuning initiative in the context of the AU's Strategy for Higher Education and the Joint Africa-EU Strategy, with the Association of Africa Universities (AAU). Tuning is an internationally recognised method to (re-)design, develop, implement and evaluate competence-based study programmes and develop new teaching and learning methods. The process has a direct impact on recognition, quality assurance and capacity building. In the last 4 years, the Tuning methodology was applied to 60 African universities from 29 countries in 5 disciplines. The number of benefiting universities will be doubled, the number of participating African countries expanded and 3 more disciplines added.

(Details available online: www.tuningafrica.org – Deadline for applications: 23 May 2015)

Call for applications: Next Einstein Fellows

The Next Einstein Forum (NEF) invites applications from exceptional Young African scientists from all over the world, in all fields of science (including the social sciences) and technology for a special opportunity to become NEF Fellows. The NEF Fellowship programme aims to identify Africa's top 15 young scientists.

(Details available online: www.nef.org – Deadline for applications: 15 June 2015)

Upcoming events:

- 4-6 May (NEW DATES) – Equatorial Guinea: CARIMA Annual Conference & training workshops including a Horizon 2020 information session by the CAAST-Net Plus project (www.caast-net-plus.org) (www.carima-net.org/en/Annual-Conference) - contact: Josepha Foba Tendo (jnfoba@gmail.com)
- 5-8 May – Lilongwe, Malawi: **IST-Africa 2015** (www.ist-africa.org/conference2015)
- 9 May: Europe Day celebrates the 1950 Declaration by Robert Schumann, a founder of the EU. (http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/europe-day/schuman-declaration/index_en.htm)
- 10-11 May – Johannesburg: **CAAST-Net Plus annual meeting** associated with ACU-SARIMA conference (www.caast-net-plus.org/object/event/1049), incl. joint session on DRUSSA (www.drussa.net)
- 10-14 May – Johannesburg: **ACU-SARIMA conference** (www.acusarima.com)
- 20-22 May – Addis Ababa: **eLearning Africa** conference (www.elearning-africa.com)
- 28-29 May – Accra: **Horizon 2020 Regional training workshop for National Contact Points**
- 24-26 June – Addis Ababa: **PopPov Research Conference** on Population, Reproductive Health and Economic Development (<http://poppov.org/Events/2015/Ninth-Annual-PopPov-Conference.aspx>)
- 13-16 July 2015 – Addis Ababa: **AAS proposal development workshops** for African scientists. (www.aasciences.org/index.php/news-a-events/419)

Website of EU Delegation to the African Union (AU): http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/african_union

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