



**AFRICAN UNION**



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## **WG COMED news brief**

### **Launch of the Pan African University**

*Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – 14 December, 2011*

The Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Mr. Jean Ping today launched the Pan African University in the presence of over 200 university academics that included Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, and other institutional heads as well as higher education stakeholders, researchers, development partners, student representatives, and policy makers. A good number of ministers of education and African Union Commissioners also attended the launch.

The Representative of the European Commission at the African Union declared the European Commission's support for this initiative and stressed that this was a timely event as this Pan African University should meet Africa's learning challenges in this 21st century. The African Union Chairperson Jean Ping expressed delight that the year 2011 is ending on a good note with two remarkable events for the continent – the launch of the Pan African University and the awarding of the prizes for the third edition of the Kwame Nkrumah African Union Scientific Awards. In his keynote address, Mr. Ping portrayed the historical background to the establishment of this Pan African University, and noted that it was the keen collaboration between the member states of the African Union that resulted in the creation of Centres of Excellence on the continent and this in turn is now giving birth to the Pan African University, a challenge which the continent and its peoples have aspired to for some time now. The African Union Commission Chairperson noted that in the various official declarations made by the African Union Heads of States and Governments, the development of science and technology for the continent has been very visible.

Addressing the gathering were also Professor Lamine Ndiaye of Senegal, President of the High Level Panel for the establishment of the Pan African University who stressed on the importance of implementation. Over the past decades, Africa has emerged good ideas, but it

is time to put them into practice, he noted. The Kenyan Minister of Education, Professor Sam Ogeri, who is also the current Chairperson of the Conference of African Ministers of Education known as COMEDAF said “We have been in the dark for many years and we can now see light at the end of the tunnel”. He noted that the intent and trust of the African Union Commission Heads of States and Governments over the years was meant to result in what is being achieved now. Other speakers at the launch included the African Union Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology, Professor Jean Pierre Ezin. The purpose for the establishment of the Pan African University is ensure the establishment of the Arusha Convention by creating a an exemplary and uniquely different and modern educational structure which focuses on integrative teaching and cutting-edge research, and which is strategically conceptualized within the context of the diverse African cultural values, linguistic pluralism, and aspiration of the scientific and technological breakthroughs towards the continent’s development. The Pan African University will provide an opportunity for the African continent to claim its rightful place in the global knowledge-based economy. This university is based on already existing centres across the continent, seeking to promote science and technology in Africa and a strong link between scientific research and economic development. In achieving this objective, the Pan African University will enhance the triple missions of modern universities around the world, namely education and training, research, and public service and engagement.

During the launch, the prestigious African Union Kwame Nkrumah Regional Scientific Awards for Women were presented to the seven 2011 winners. The successful laureates are from Southern, Northern, Western and Central Regions of Africa. They are 1. Professor Rose Gana Fomban Leke from the Central Region, presently Professor of Immunology and parasitology and head of Department at the Faculty of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences at the University of Yaounde 1, and Director of the Biotechnology Centre at the same university; 2. Professor Eblehal El-Demerdash a researcher from Egypt who has published about 135 research papers in international, regional and Egyptian research journals in several medical fields including cardiovascular pharmacology, chemotherapy, and gene therapy as well as in the areas of toxins and protection; 3. Assistant Professor Nermin El Semary, an Egyptian who obtained a PhD on community genetics of cyanobacteria from the University of Bristol in the United Kingdom. She is currently working on the production of biofuel from microalgae and maintaining good scientific network of engineers and scientists from Egypt and abroad; 4. Professor Maureen Coetzee, from South Africa is Research Professor and Director of the Malaria Entomology Research Unit in the School of Pathology, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg; 5. Dr. Ethersia Pretorius, from South Africa is a member of the Department of Physiology of the Faculty of health Sciences at the University of Pretoria. Since 2005, she researched on the use of the electron microscope as tool to study diseases that specifically affect platelets and fibrin networks, using both human and animal models. In 2007, she was chosen as exceptional achiever in the Faculty of health sciences. 6. Professor Dosso Mireille Carmen from Cote d’Ivoire who has 147 peer reviewed

articles in international ISI rated journals, with majority of her articles published in high impact factor journals such as the Journal of Infectious Diseases. In 1982, Prof Carmen established the training programme in Microbiology in Medicine, Pharmacy and Biosciences for Engineers and laboratory Technicians in Cote d'Ivoire and to date she has trained 64 post graduate students. 7. Professor Kakou Yao Rita, from Cote d'Ivoire who over the past 20 years has been actively involved in several collaborative research work with some partners from the European and ECOWAS countries. Prof Yao has chaired several juries for Baccalaureates in Cote d'Ivoire and was also a member of the council for curriculum development for the department of Material sciences and Technology. Each of the laureates will be receiveing a US \$20,000 cash prize.

The launch ceremony was preceded by a one-day seminar held at the United Nations premises in Addis Ababa. The theme of this seminar was Higher Education Paradigms in intra-African Trade. The seminar attended by Vice-Chancellors, Rectors, and other institutional heads as well as higher education stakeholders, researchers, development partners, student representatives, and policy makers discussed the potential challenges in the implementation of the Pan African University and the contribution of the African University in general in regional integration and intra-African trade. Many important issues emerged during this seminar including the role of the African University in African regional integration and intra-African trade, academic mobility as facilitated by the Revised Arusha Convention, and ensuring quality and excellence in higher education as well as resource mobilization