

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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4th MID YEAR COORDINATION MEETING
PRESS CONFERENCE OF H.E Prof. Mohammed Belhocine, ESTI Commissioner
TOPIC: PROGRESS AT THE PAN AFRICAN UNIVERSITY (PAU)
Lusaka, Zambia
14 July 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear media professionals,

Let me first start with thanking the Government and people of Zambia for their warm welcome and for the excellent organization and conditions of work. I am very pleased to be in your company and most importantly to deliver this statement on the great strides made by the Pan African University since its inception and operationalization.

The Pan African University (PAU) was created following a Decision of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in July 2010 in Kampala, Uganda (Assembly/AU/Dec.290 (XV)).

The AUC launched the Pan African University as a flagship continental initiative in December 2011. It is a continent-wide university offering postgraduate (Master and Doctoral) programs with the aim of establishing an academic network of already existing post-graduate and research institutions and continuously injecting high-skilled human resources that will help spur the development of our continent, Africa.

The Pan African University became operational in 2012 with the first intake of students. Today, the University has four hubs distributed across the continent, namely:

- a. Water and Energy Sciences (including Climate Change) (PAUWES, Tlemcen, Algeria);
- b. Basic Science, Technology and Innovation (PAUSTI, Juja, Kenya);
- c. Life and Earth Sciences (including Health and Agriculture) (PAULESI, Ibadan, Nigeria);
- d. Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences (PAUGHSS, Yaoundé, Cameroon);
- e. A Space Sciences Institute (PAUSSI) is to start in South Africa.

All these institutes offer courses in specialties related to their area of focus. For instance, PAULESI in Ibadan proposes plant breeding and medicinal plant research trainings, which are forward-looking domains aiming at improving the quality of crops and using plants for health purposes.

Within the framework of their research works, students of the Pan African University Institute for Science Technology and Innovation (PAUSTI), based in Juja, Kenya, have developed several inventions with patents, also aimed at improving the quality of food and thereby providing adequate endogenous responses to local nutrition issues.

Admission of students

With regard to the admission of students, the number of applications received by the Pan African University has increased significantly over the past eight years. For instance, between the 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 academic years, the number of students who applied to join the pan African University Institutes increased by 241 percent (from 5,403 to 13,048). Similarly, the number of applicants increased to 14,007 in the 2020/2021 academic year.

2. Scholarships Award and Country representation

Over the 2012-2021 period, the Pan African University awarded scholarships to 2,600 (830 females and 1,752 males) students from 51 African Union Member States. This breaks down to 2000 MSc/MA and 600 PhD scholarships. These are rounded figures.

With respect to the number of Member States benefiting from the Pan African University scholarship award, it increased gradually from 21 in 2012/2013 to 53 in 2021/2022. This

means that to date, 53 African Union Member States are represented in the University, an evidence of the heightened interest it has been able to arouse over the years.

3. Students' graduation

Since 2012, year of the creation of PAU, 1,617 students have graduated (1,081 males and 536 females). The number of graduants keeps increasing over the years, as the university gets more visibility, traction and relevance at the level of its academic programmes that proved adapted to development challenges currently facing our continent.

4. New programmes

Very much concerned about the quality of education, one of the main Institutes of the University, PAUWES, will launch the Masters' programme in Climate change as a response to the destructive impact of climate change on the lives of Africans.

In the Pan African University, education is not the exclusive focus of AU leaders. Promoting research and innovation is also part of our structural missions.

In this light, we urge our students and academic staff to contribute to scientific knowledge and to Africa's advancement through their scientific reflections and technological innovations.

5. Scientific productivity

In the 2012-2021 period, the Pan African University students and staff published about 600 articles in peer-reviewed journals. More than nine (09) patents were registered.

6. Innovative and relevant research works

Most of the research works of PAU Students fosters sustainable and quality agriculture on the continent.

At PAULESI, there are for instance students currently carrying out research to evaluate the genetic potential of existing taro varieties in Benin through agro-morphological and molecular characterization. Such research will contribute to the conservation of endangered plant genetic resources in Benin and, above all, open up a path for the development of resistant varieties to combat tragic fungal diseases.

Another student is also working on some African cassava genotypes for carotene yield and Cassava Mosaic Disease (CMD) resistance. The aim of that study is to improve cassava

for high beta-carotene (a precursor of Vitamin A) content through bio fortification to help reduce Vitamin A Deficiency on the continent.

Another PAULESI student involved in research activities with IITA. His research work focuses on the “Diversity among Phytophthoracolocasiae isolates and Taro [*Colocasiaesculenta* (L.) Schott] Populations from Nigeria and the Republic of Benin and some Prevalent Microflora”. The objective of this work is to revive Taro production in Nigeria and Benin Republic for the development of disease management strategies.

7. Entrepreneurial skills

With regard to entrepreneurship, it goes without saying that we get our students not only to nurture the entrepreneurial culture, but also to translate their hard-earned academic knowledge into feasible and productive developmental solutions for the welfare of their native countries.

This is the main reason behind the putting in place of entrepreneurship hubs in our various Institutes.

In the same vein, last year, the Pan African University launched the first edition of the PAU Innovation Challenge as another effective way to development our students’ potentials in initiating innovation solutions. We renewed the experience this year with the second edition and we hope it to be in the nearest future, more than a tradition but a legacy.

Moreso, mindful of the educational needs of the African Youth, the Pan African Virtual and E-University was launched in December 2019. We aim at increasing accessibility of academic and professional training across the continent.

8. PAU fostering Africa's Human Capital!

As a higher education institute promoting quality and exemplifying excellence, PAU has recorded several alumni success stories. We can count, one of our former Student from Côte d’Ivoire (2nd batch of PAU students) who has occupied the position of the Deputy Regional Director of the Ivoirian Electricity Company.

We can also for instance mention another former student from Rwanda who works for the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture.

A Former Student from Zimbabwe (3rd batch of PAU students), who is an engineer working at WASH, and last but not least,

A former Student from Burkina Faso (1st cohort of PAUWES students), who is the CEO of a company Salarkoodo. That former student was also selected for the conference of the Women Entrepreneurs in Africa project 2019 and was shortlisted for the Africa Prize for Engineering Innovation 2019.

Just like these few alumni, PAU has trained thousands of students who are making it today in their respective countries, on the continent or the world at large.

Infrastructure

To help the Pan-African University strengthen its structure and acquire better cost-effectiveness, relevance and utility, important actions were undertaken.

At the level of infrastructure, the construction of the Rectorate Headquarters in Yaoundé, Cameroon, is progressing at a satisfactory pace.

Meanwhile, PAULESI commissioned last March its administrative block building. And the Host University of PAUWES, Abou Bekr Belkaïd University of Tlemcen, has consolidated its buildings.

9. Challenges

Such important undertaking do not go without challenges. And PAU has some of these challenges that the Commission is working to overcome. Among those are:

The consolidation of the governance structure: The recruitment of a Rector and Vice rector. These positions have been vacant for a while. Filling them will give stability and efficiency to the administrative management of the PAU

Financial sustainability is another challenge and we intend to continue working with many of our bilateral or multilateral partners, amongst which the African Development Bank, which has supported the first phases of PAU's development.

Finally, a third challenge is to get continental and international accreditation of PAU by meeting all the required criteria.

These challenges shouldn't overshadow the huge achievements that I mentioned earlier, as they speak a lot to the real pan African dimension of the University and the quality of the trainings offered.

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