

DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION

Date: 30/4/2020

Press Release N°037/2020

KNOW YOUR AFRICAN UNION

An Integrated, Prosperous and Peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.

AU Commissioner for HRST, Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor speaks on Continental Development Agenda underpinned by Education, Youth empowerment and STI

“We want a science that can speak to the challenges Africa is facing...”



“Education of women and girls is the cornerstone of development. If at least 50% of women and girls receive good quality education, Agenda 2063 will be attainable. If we

equip girls and empower them, a future for Africa is possible. Young women and girls ought to be put at the forefront for they are often the most disadvantaged when it comes to education access. In achieving this, boys must not be left behind. Stakeholders should thus stand up for the empowerment of women and girls through education, science and technology”. Says Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor, African Union (AU) Commissioner for Human Resources Science and Technology (HRST), in an exclusive interview with the Directorate of Information and Communication (DIC).

Leaving no stone unturned when engaging the youths as she says they are the leaders of tomorrow, HRST Commissioner recalls the AU’s Vision of “an integrated, prosperous Africa, driven by its own competent and skilled citizens able to play in the global arena”. She said, the African Union is working towards empowering the youth at different arenas in the different departmental mandates. “Aspiration Six of Agenda 2063 envisages - An Africa whose development is people driven, relying on the potential of its people, especially its women and youth and caring for children”. She stresses that the role of the youth in Africa’s Agenda 2063 is very crucial and that is why a full year (2017) was dedicated by the AU as the year of Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth.

According to Prof. Anyang Agbor, the African Union’s work on youth development is guided by the four pillars of the Demographic Dividend agenda as identified by the roadmap: Employment and Entrepreneurship, Education and Skills Development, Health and Wellbeing, and Rights, Governance and Youth Empowerment. The Commissioner underscored the need to empower the youth as a way by the AU to foster a sense of belonging “to our dear continent”. To further reinforce the special role the youth play, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC), H.E Moussa Faki Mahamat, appointed a Special Youth envoy for youth in the person of Miss Aya Chebbi and he inaugurated a Youth Advisory Board in 2018.

The Commissioner recalled that the AUC Chairperson’s 1Million by 2021 Initiative which was officially launched on 24th April 2019, under the theme “**Africa unite for youth: Bridging the gap and reaching out to African youth**”, will create opportunities for Africa’s young people to achieve the 4Es – Employment, Entrepreneurship, Education and Engagement. The “Initiative” aims to concretely reach millions of African youth from across the continent and foster new approaches towards addressing the multifaceted challenges confronting the youth on the continent. The expectation is that this initiative will embolden various stakeholders to develop creative ideas and help build an ecosystem of efficiencies across the continent in furtherance of youth development. She stressed the importance of Education and STI for the realization of AU Chairperson’s initiative focused on creating

direct opportunities for the development of young people in Africa, with the view to actively and meaningfully drive the full realization of Africa's Agenda 2063.

Commissioner Anyang Agbor further explained that, her department developed in 2019, the African Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment (APAYE) as the AU's overarching programmatic document to guide and influence the efforts and contributions of key partners and stakeholders engaged in youth empowerment on the continent. She said to foster youth empowerment in Africa, the AU has always celebrated the Africa Youth Day which is observed annually every first of November as instituted by the Executive Council. "The Model African Union", which is a simulation of the youth version of the Union, was also initiated by the HRST Department to give an opportunity for the African youth to familiarize themselves with the AU decision making processes. It is intended to help the youth understand how the AU decisions are implemented with the objective to improve the lives of the African citizens as well as develop the continent.

Still on youth development, the department of HRST manages the African Union Youth Volunteers Corps (AU-AYVC), a flagship programme of the AU which recruits, trains and deploys young African professionals as volunteers for a period of 12 months across the continent. AU-AYVC promotes volunteerism to deepen the status of young people in Africa as key actors in Africa's developmental targets and goals, while enhancing their participation in policy development as well as design implementation of relevant interventions towards the AU Agenda 2063-The Africa We Want. Thus, encouraging Africa's integration.

Education: Key enabler for "The Africa We Want"

The AU has embarked on developing and harmonizing education policies and programs on the continent, in line with the AU vision. To that effect, the Department of HRST is spearheading the revitalization of education systems within the continent. It is responsible to develop and manage continental education as well as information systems linked to regional and national levels by providing information intended for local and international users. The department also organizes meetings of the relevant Specialized Technical Committee (STC) and other political and professional bodies to ensure collective articulation of priorities, ownership and accountability.

Another mandate of the HRST Department is to contribute towards revitalized, quality, relevant, and harmonized education systems responsive to the needs of Africa, while taking into account Africa's aspiration and capacity in terms of human and material resources. This includes putting in place systems that produce Africans with appropriate attitudes, values, knowledge and skills to facilitate attainment of the AU

vision; systems that generate applied and new knowledge and contribute towards Africa's capacity to face challenges as well as placing Africa firmly in the center of global knowledge economy.

The Department of HRST uses strategies such as (CESA16-25) the Continental Education Strategy for Africa and the Continental Technical and Vocational Educational Training (TVET) Strategy to implement the following programs:

- The Pan African University (PAU);
- The Pan African Institute of Education for Development (IPED);
- The AU International Centre for Girls and Women's Education in Africa (CIEFFA);
- The Mwalimu Nyerere Scholarship and Academic Mobility Programme;
- Teacher Development in Africa;
- The Higher Education Program; and
- The Pan African Virtual and E University (PAVEU) (One of the flagship programmes of the African Union)

The Mwalimu Nyerere Programme is an umbrella for implementing scholarship and mobility initiatives including the Basic Nyerere Scholarship as well as other initiatives such as the Intra-ACP academic mobility scheme (or Extended Nyerere) within the framework Africa-Europe collaboration; and the Africa-India Fellowship Programme under the Africa-India strategic partnership. The Programme is still open for new partnerships and development of innovative scholarship and academic mobility and collaborative schemes.

The objective of the Nyerere programme is to increase the access of talented young men and women to university education in Africa, particularly at post-graduate level; promote intra-African academic mobility and strengthen institutional partnerships towards regional integration and harmonization of higher education and research; and improve the quality of higher education by promoting cooperation between tertiary education institutions. Furthermore, it is important as it helps establish an influential group of Nyerere Alumni and contribute to the attractiveness of African Universities and alleviation of brain drain among others.

The Pan African University (PAU) is a project of the AU. It is the culmination of continental initiatives of the AU Commission to revitalize higher education and research in Africa, under the Second Decade of Education for Africa and the consolidated Plan of Action of Science and Technology for Africa. The PAU is aimed at exemplifying excellence, enhance the attractiveness and global competitiveness of African higher education and research as well as establish the African University at

the core of Africa's development. The PAU is intended to boost the population and retention of high-level human resources and quality knowledge outputs, while attracting the best intellectual capacity from all over the world.

Africa acknowledges the fact that social and economic development is not possible without substantive investment in higher education and research. That is why the AU has created the Pan African University established in the five regions of the continent corresponding to the following five thematic areas:

1. **Water and Energy** including climate change (PAUWES,) hosted by the University of Tlemcen in Algeria for North Africa;
2. **Life and Earth Sciences** including Health and Agriculture (PAULESI), hosted by the University of Ibadan in Nigeria for Western Africa;
3. **Basic Sciences, Technology and Innovation** (PAUSTI), hosted by Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya for Eastern Africa;
4. **Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences** (PAUGHSS,) hosted by the University of Yaoundé II in the Republic of Cameroon for Central Africa; and
5. **Space Sciences** (PAUSS), to be hosted by South Africa for Southern Africa

Meanwhile, the Pan African Virtual and E- University (PAVEU) is one of AU's flagship projects that has been proposed for addressing the Agenda 2063 need for accelerating development of human capital, innovation, science and technology through increasing access to tertiary virtual education in Africa , making use of the digital revolution and global knowledge to reach out to the largest number of students and professionals in multiple sites simultaneously at any time; and consolidating African initiatives and strategies on accelerated development of human capital, science, technology and innovation. The Pan African Virtual and E-University was successfully launched on 20th December 2019 in Cameroon, Central Africa.

Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor highlighted that the vision of PAVEU is, to be a leading centre of excellence in providing open access to online higher education and research for the advancement of Africa. She added that the PAVEU project is being operationalized as the Open, Distance and E-Learning arm of the Pan African University (PAU), resulting from a decision that was approved by the Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology that took place in Cairo, Egypt on 23-25 October 2017 and endorsed by the Executive Council in January 2018. The PAVEU is currently hosted at the Pan African University Rectorate Headquarters in Yaoundé, Cameroon. The first two courses (Cloud Computing and Virtualization, and Media and Information Literacy) of PAVEU began on 15th January 2020.

The Commissioner for HRST, announced during her interview that, her department has been organizing Innovation Education Expo to showcase practical, social and

technological innovations, aimed at enhancing access to quality, relevant and inclusive education with the view to realize the potential for empowerment, employability and inventiveness. “An African union Research grant AURG was initiated to promote research collaboration and capacitate the youth with competences and skills.” Said the Commissioner. She therefore encouraged AU Member States to implement the Continental Technical and Vocational Educational Strategy, given that investing in technical education will promote entrepreneurship and the acquisition of skills. It will also help in forming a synergy between policy makers, private sector and the youth, in line with the Skills Initiative for Africa (SIFA) project.

Enhancing Scientific Research and Technology Development in Africa

At the Sixth World Congress for Freedom of Scientific Research held on 25-26 February 2020 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, under the theme: “The Right to Enjoy the Benefits of Science; An African Perspective”, Prof. Anyang Agbor, reiterated the importance to promote the right of every citizen to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and its applications, support scientific research and conservation, development, and diffusion of science, technology and innovation to ensure that Africa undertakes research and innovation that address the challenges of socio-economic development as articulated in Agenda 2063. According to the Commissioner for HRST, science is a Human Right and each person has the right to enjoy its fruits. She stressed on the need to advance science, technology and innovation for the betterment of humanity by addressing pressing societal challenges such as food and nutrition security, escalating population growth; huge energy deficit; poverty and inequalities; diseases; adverse impact of climate change; weak research and associated digital infrastructures and low investment in science and technology to mention a few.

The Commissioner noted that, because Africa is still disproportionately affected by all these known development challenges, advances in science, technology and innovation become very critical for the socio-economic development of the continent. She stressed that the Commission considers education, youth and capacity development, science, technology and innovation among the key enablers and tools for delivering on the aspirations of the African citizens. They are important for the creation of long-term economic benefits for the continent and beyond.

In this regard the AU department for HRST has elaborated three distinct strategies for Education to drive human capital development, youth empowerment, productivity and economic growth. They are: the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA-16-25); the Technical and Vocational Education and Training; (TVET); and the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA-2024). “These

strategies have helped to break down barriers that create a fragmented system on the continent through strengthening coordination and addressing weak levels of investment in these sectors. Hence, the need to promote a multi-disciplinary approach that creates new value chains, adds value to our natural resources and accelerates the diffusion of breakthrough innovations into industries and society”. Emphasized the Commissioner.

Meanwhile, the AU Science Strategy seen through STISA 2024 speaks to the African Perspective of STI. It is anchored on six distinct priority areas that contribute to the AU vision. They are:

1. Eradication of Hunger and achieving Food Security;
2. Prevention and control of Diseases;
3. Communication (Physical and Intellectual mobility);
4. Protection of our space;
5. Live together - build the society and;
6. Wealth creation.

With regard to the African Union Kwame Nkrumah Scientific Awards, the Commissioner said it is aimed at raising awareness on the central role of S&T in Africa’s socio-economic development while promoting public understanding and participation in Africa’s STI agenda. It gives awards of 100,000 USD each to the best selected two African scientists every year. “One way for Africans to enjoy the benefits of science is for us to upscale our traditional medicine through medicinal Plant Research so that these indigenous traditional medicine can become competing pharmaceutical products that can benefit our people”. She noted.

Commissioner Anyang however concluded that, the continent requires a more responsive, stronger and more dynamic sustainable research enterprise. She said, “If we want change to happen in Africa, the continent needs to make changes, in advocating for increased investments in education, science, technology and innovation...There is no doubt that mobilizing domestic excellence and financial resources as well as leveraging external support and collaboration are vital for unlocking the potential of youths for innovation, science Technology.”

Esther Azaa Tankou, Head of Information Division, Tel: 0911361185; Email: yamboue@africa-union.org ; Directorate of Information and Communication; AU Commission

About the African Union

The African Union spearheads Africa’s development and integration in close collaboration with African Union Member States, the Regional Economic Communities and African citizens. AU

Vision: to accelerate progress towards an integrated, prosperous and inclusive Africa, at peace with itself, playing a dynamic role in the continental and global arena, effectively driven by an accountable, efficient and responsive Commission.

Learn more at: <http://www.au.int/en>

For further information please contact:

Directorate of Information and Communication | African Union Commission | **E-mail:** DIC@african-union.org | **Website:** www.au.int | Addis Ababa | Ethiopia Follow Us: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#)