

African Leaders Endorse a Science Funding Platform for Africa: the Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESAs)

For immediate release

Nairobi/Addis Ababa/London/Seattle/Johannesburg, March 9, 2015: In a key development for scientific and health research in Africa, the African Union (AU) Heads of State and Government Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, endorsed the establishment of the **Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESAs)** - a platform created by **the African Academy of Sciences (AAS)** and the **NEPAD Agency**. This pan-African platform offers an opportunity for the long-term development of research leadership, scientific excellence and innovation that impact on Africa's developmental challenges. The AESA platform will, among other things, identify challenges that hinder rapid scientific advancement in Africa, run open calls for proposals with transparent review processes, actively manage grants and evaluate and measure the impact of such investments. AESA will promote the collaborative and coordinated implementation of the African Union's (AU) Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024) in the area of health.

H.E. Dr. Martial De-Paul Ikounga, Commissioner of Human Resources, Science and Technology (HRST) at the AU said: "We developed STISA as a multi-purpose policy advocacy strategy for mainstreaming innovation in the priority areas of the African Union of which health and wellbeing are part. Mobilization of domestic excellence and financial resources and leveraging external support are vital for the successful implementation of STISA 2024".

H.E. Dr. Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, CEO of NEPAD Agency remarked that the NEPAD Agency is committed to work with African institutions in applying science, technology and innovation in addressing Africa's challenges in health and is therefore pleased to draw upon the capacity that resides at the African Academy of Sciences to establish AESA

African leaders at the 24th Summit meeting from 30-31 January 2015 also called upon Member States, regional and global partners as well as private foundations to support the Alliance in order to strengthen health research and innovation in Africa.

AESA has already received the recognition and financial support of three developmental partners, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Wellcome Trust and UK's Department for International Development (DfID). In a response to this call by the Summit these three partners issued a statement saying: 'We welcome the African Union's recent call to establish the Alliance for Accelerating Excellence in Science in Africa (AESAs), to be led by the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) in collaboration with the NEPAD Agency. The announcement marks a major step toward advancing global health and development across the continent. We are funding the development of AESA and share the vision of supporting the next generation of outstanding

African researchers, who will help solve some of the continent's greatest health and development challenges.

When announcing AESA at a recent meeting of twenty African Academies, the AAS President Prof. Aderemi Kuku referred to this development by saying 'this marks a new dawn for science development on the continent'.

A formal launch of AESA is planned on the side-lines of the next AU summit in June 2015 in South Africa.

ENDS

About the African Union (AU)

The African Union (AU) is a Union of 54 African states which aims to accelerate the process of integration in the continent to enable it play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political challenges. The highest leadership of the AU is the Assembly of Heads of States and Government. The secretariat of the AU is the African Union Commission (AUC), based in Ethiopia.

About the African Academy of Sciences (AAS)

AAS is a pan African organization. An Academy of all Sciences that honors the best African and non-African scientific leaders and is implementing programs in 6 key STI areas. It has been recognizing African and Africa experts by recruiting them into the AAS Fellowship since 1985. These Fellows, who are proven STI leaders live and work in all corners of the continent. AAS has a strategic partnership with the AU, and its technical bodies such as NEPAD and the PAU. AAS enjoys the support of several governments (particularly Kenya and Nigeria), major international funding partners and is regarded as a "Strategic Partner" by the African Union Commission and NEPAD Agency.

About NEPAD Agency

NEPAD Agency is the technical body of the African Union. The core mandate of the NEPAD Agency is to facilitate and coordinate the implementation of regional and continental priority programmes and projects and to push for partnerships, resource mobilisation and research and knowledge management. The NEPAD Agency is based in Johannesburg, South Africa.

About Wellcome Trust

The Wellcome Trust is a global charitable foundation dedicated to improving health. We support bright minds in science, the humanities and the social sciences, as well as education, public engagement and the application of research to medicine.

Our investment portfolio gives us the independence to support such transformative work as the sequencing and understanding of the human genome, research that established front-line drugs for

malaria, and Wellcome Collection, our free venue for the incurably curious that explores medicine, life and art.

About DFID

The Department for International Development (DFID) is leading the UK Government in fighting poverty through job creation, women and girls' empowerment and helping save lives in humanitarian emergencies. DFID's Research and Evidence Division (RED) objective is to make DFID more systematic in using evidence as a basis for how best to reduce global poverty, and provide high quality relevant evidence to others. It aims to achieve this through commissioning research on key questions in development, robust evaluations of UKaid's funded programmes, high quality statistics and active engagement with policy makers.

For more information on research funding offered by the Department for International Development and its programme partners please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-international-development/about/research>

About the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation

Guided by the belief that every life has equal value, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives. In developing countries, it focuses on improving people's health and giving them the chance to lift themselves out of hunger and extreme poverty. In the United States, it seeks to ensure that all people – especially those with the fewest resources – have access to the opportunities they need to succeed in school and life. Based in Seattle, Washington, the foundation is led by CEO Sue Desmond-Hellman and Co-Chair William H. Gates Sr., under the direction of Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.