

## “AFRICAN YOUTH CAN HELP ATTAIN MDGS”, SAYS AYFST

African youth in sub Saharan Africa face diverse unique challenges ranging from unemployment, reproductive health problems, poor governance, environmental degradation, and food insecurity. Most of these concerns are encompassed within the Millennium Development Goals that quite clearly require youth inclusion to become a reality by 2015.

Since the 1<sup>st</sup> ATPS/CTA youth meeting in Nairobi, African youth have been calling for avenues to enhance their meaningful contribution to Africa's development yet these same youth continue to be largely excluded from participating in mainstream development policymaking.

In recognisance of the fact that youth involvement is crucial in attaining the millennium development Goals, the 3<sup>rd</sup> African Regional Youth Congress on Science and Technology was held for the third successive time, under the theme *Enhancing the role of the youth in attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) in Africa: Implications for Science, Technology and Innovation* at the Hotel Africana in Kampala Uganda from the 3 to 5 July, 2007. The congress focused on Food Security and Poverty Alleviation, Climate Change, Environmental Sustainability & Water Scarcity, and Youth & Reproductive Health. During the congress, the youth learnt that the solutions to all these challenges lie within themselves and they saw some practical examples of how their fellow youth have and can use S&T and Innovation to transform their situations.

The youth congress was held with support from the African Youth Forum for Science and Technology (AYFST) in collaboration with the African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS), The Technical Centre for Agriculture and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the Uganda National Council of Science and Technology (UNCST), the Ugandan Youth Association for Science and Technology (UYASTI) and Log'el project.

The 2006 Accra Communiqué, resulting from the 2<sup>nd</sup> youth congress in Accra, specifically called for training and capacity building in agriculture science and technology, mentorship by seniors and incorporation into research programmes, representation at national, regional and international forums where African issues are being deliberated and enhanced information sharing forums.

In response to this, the Kampala youth meeting aimed at designing a full-fledged program on *“enhancing the role of youth in attaining the MDGS through science, technology and innovation”* that is expected to be hinged on training and capacity building; mentorship and research; opportunities to participate in policy debates as well as information sharing channels.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> youth congress also aimed at sharing experiences and lessons on how the youth have utilized agricultural science, technology and innovation (ASTI) towards attaining the MDGS in Africa and further sought to discuss and approve the AYFST draft

strategic plan (2007 - 2010) in addition to reviewing the progress of the African Youth Forum on Science and Technology (AYFST) since its launch in June 2006.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Congress brought together young professionals, scientists, youth leaders and representatives from national, regional and international institutions and civil society , including those in the Diaspora, who are committed to the promotion and application of Agricultural science, technology and innovation (ASTI) in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS) Africa. The congress combined the creativity and innovativeness of youth with the experience, guidance and mentorship of the resource persons in seeking ways of facilitating and promoting greater involvement of the youth in attaining the MDGS through greater application of science and technology.

More uniquely, the conference attracted young African scholars in the Diaspora who not only challenged but inspired many of the youth participants to obtain the highest quality of education and use this knowledge to transform their local communities in Africa.

One of the highlights of the congress was the launch of the AYFST/CTA/FARA/RUFORUM youth competition in the application of agricultural science, technology and innovation for development in Africa. During the congress, participants had a chance to review the AYFST website ([www.ayfst.org](http://www.ayfst.org) ) and make suggestions on improving it to become a platform for information and knowledge sharing amongst Africa's young professionals

Some of the key dignitaries at the meeting included Dr Peter Ndemere the Executive Secretary of the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) Prof Joseph Obua, the ATPS Uganda National Coordinator, Ms Sheila Maina, ATPS Research and Training Manager, Dr Kevin Urama ATPS incoming director and Mr Mondo Chateka, Representative of the Minister for Youth and Children Affairs, Uganda.

In his welcome remarks, the ATPS Coordinator, Uganda- Chapter Prof Obua welcomed participants saying he was glad that 18 out of the 21 presentations in the congress were to be made by youth especially since about 23% of the Uganda's population comprise of youth. He called on the youth to link up and collaborate to utilise science and technology for development and further urged participants to learn from the congress keeping in mind that the society wanted to see practical outcomes from the meeting.

During the official opening, Mr. Mondo Chateka, representative of the Minister for Youth and Children Affairs, Uganda stated that S&T is one of the priority areas in Uganda and is the engine for national development and indicated that newly industrialized countries such as Brazil and China succeeded by building on indigenous S&T. He urged African youth to be resilient despite the many challenges facing the continent such as inadequate financial, physical and human resources, reluctance to invest in infrastructure for S&T education and disparity in the number of male and female students studying S&T courses. Mr Chateka challenged the youth to give Science and Technology a new image and called on them to think beyond the horizon, tapping

individual capacities, and looking for further alternatives arguing that “if you don’t think, you will sink”

In his keynote speech, AYFST Regional Coordinator, Mr Maurice Bolo underscored the need for youth to deliberate on Africa’s challenge and emphasized on the critical role of the youth in any attempt to attain the MDGS. Mr Bolo insisted that there was need to focus on science and technology in accelerating the journey to achieving MDGS and said that many African leaders were beginning to respond to their youth and were willing to listen to and mentor the youth.

In her keynote speech, ATPS Research and Training Manager, Ms Sheila Maina, attributed Africa’s developmental woes to the exclusion of the dynamism and potential of the African youth who constitute more than a quarter of the population in Africa. The ATPS incoming Director Dr. Kevin Urama quoted Kenyan born Illinois Senator, Barrack Obama, in his welcome remarks and expressed AYFST’s dream to create a group of African youth where innovation was the norm. He said that this dream could be achieved through the audacity of hope, audacity of courage, and knowledge networking. He further elaborated a framework for supporting youth programmes in Africa towards achieving the MDGS by mobilizing the youth to harness STI for development in Africa, supporting regional knowledge sharing, facilitating youth engagement, and facilitating career mentorship of African youth by senior colleagues in Africa and Diaspora.

Some of the presentations during the congress included

- *“Optimization for Poverty and Hunger Eradication: A Comparative Case Study of Researcher - Managed and Farmer - Managed Banana Production in Shire Valley, Malawi” by Isaac Fandika*
- *“The role of school garden program in food security and poverty reduction: A case study to Rwanda Primary and Secondary Schools” by Ndayabaje Jean Claude*
- *“The Effects of Climate Change in Nigeria: A Review” O.O. Oke*
- *Creating Employment for youth and achieving Goal 7 through Science, Technology and Innovation, Kutengeneza akala, kuinua maisha” by Emma Njoki Wamai*
- *“Reversing the loss of environmental resources: A case of how the Korup youth and indigenous knowledge is helping in the protection of Korup national Park in Cameroon” Charles Takoyoh Eyong*
- *“Paper Manufacturing from Waste Paper and Natural Fibres” Atuheire K. Godfrey, Uganda*
- *“Climate Change, Environment Sustainability and Water Scarcity” Petlane Sebili Lesotho*

- *“Efficacy of Crestar (Progesterone analogue) and Prosolvin (Prostaglandin analogue) in heat synchronization of indigenous smallholder dairy and commercial beef cows” Obert Tada of Zimbabwe*

During the business session at the congress, the taskforce that had been charged with developing the AYFST Draft Strategic Plan (2007 - 2010)” presented their work to the participants with a view to explore a range of activities that would ensure the attainment of the AYFST vision of empowered youth and communities that enjoy sustainable livelihoods. Representatives from francophone Africa called on their fuller inclusion in AYFST activities and also urged AYFST to keep the African Lusophone countries in order to ensure effective continental networking and participation in the African continent.

Youth attendees were presented with a certificate of participation and a t-shirt during the colorful closing ceremony. In his closing address, Mr Maurice Bolo told participants to watch out for the upcoming AYFST/CTA/FARA/RUFORUM competition on the AYFST website. He further emphasized that AYFST had no intentions to break away from the ATPS network and instead the AYFST national chapters needed to work more closely with the ATPS national coordinator.

Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA)

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)

**THE 3<sup>RD</sup> AFRICAN REGIONAL YOUTH CONGRESS ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

AYFST/ATPS/CTA/UNCST/UNAS/UYASTI/LOG'EL  
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