

**Opportunities
in agriculture
will help
Women are particularly vulnerable
Progress in implementing the APRM**

**Stakeholders from all
sectors**

**Independence
of process
is emphasised
Services are
too poorly funded
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NEPAD launches new initiatives in science and technology

Three networks of centres of excellence

The NEPAD Secretariat, in its drive to establish networks of centres of excellence in science and technology, has launched three initiatives -- the African Institute of Space Science, the Bioscience facility for Eastern and Central Africa, and the African Laser Centre.

Nodes for these centres of excellence will be regionally positioned and networked across the continent.

African Institute of Space Science

The African Institute of Space Science (AISS) is aimed at grouping existing space science activities and facilities into a network that focuses on frontier science for Africa's development.

The idea of AISS emerged from a workshop of astronomers and space scientists who were discussing the future of astronomy and space science in South Africa in 2002.

One of the emerging themes of the workshop was that greater collaboration within Africa and other South-South collaboration would strengthen the continent's scientific and technological capacity in space science.

A regional initiative has now emerged to harness space science for the development of Africa without crippling investments for any individual country and NEPAD is actively mobilising countries and their resources to establish the AISS.

This effort will enable Africa to exploit a wide range of potential applications of space in addition to the usual satellite applications such as meteorology and remote sensing. Satellite navigation systems would also benefit economic development and tourism in many African countries.

To maximise the comparative advantages of various African countries, the AISS is being organised as a network of operational centres based on existing facilities with nodes across the continent.

Bioscience Facility for Eastern and Central Africa

The NEPAD Bioscience Centres of Excellence is a new initiative to support African countries in developing and applying bioscience research expertise to produce technologies that will help poor farmers to improve agricultural productivity. This is a logical development: the NEPAD Secretariat has been instrumental in mobilising resources to upgrade laboratories on the African continent.

The first cluster of networked world-class laboratories is being established for East and Central Africa.

The Secretariat has secured C\$30 million from the Canada Africa Fund to establish state-of-the-art research laboratories for the biosciences, including genomics and proteomic and containment facilities for safe genetic manipulation of plants (for example the development of improved varieties) and micro-organisms for vaccine development, as well as the safe handling of pathogens used in the research programmes.

The NEPAD Biosciences Facility for East and Central Africa is part of refurbished laboratories at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), in Nairobi, Kenya. This greatly reduces the need to invest in new buildings and infrastructure.

African scientists are being encouraged to design projects for implementation at the NEPAD facility. Protocols are being developed to attract African scientists based in Europe and the US to return and conduct research in the facility.

[African Laser Centre](#)

The African Laser Centre is a network of relatively large facilities dedicated to research and training in laser technologies. It includes the National Laser Centre (Pretoria, South Africa), University of Cheikh Anta Diop (Dakar, Senegal), Laser and Fibre Optics Centre (Cape Coast, Ghana), National Institute of Laser Enhanced Science (Cairo, Egypt), Tunis el Manar University (Tunis, Tunisia), and Advanced Technologies Development Centre (Algiers, Algeria).

These facilities specialise in materials processing, atomic and molecular physics, agricultural and environmental sciences, medical applications of lasers, and manufacturing.

The NEPAD Secretariat is designing protocols to facilitate the exchange of information and scientists across the facilities. It is also mobilising resources to upgrade the facilities and design continental programmes to be implemented by the network. NEPAD is also actively promoting collaboration among laser researchers throughout Africa and between African laser institutions and their international counterparts.

Through the African Laser Centre major efforts will be made to reverse the brain drain of researchers from the African continent to the more scientifically and technologically advanced regions of the world by providing a competitive knowledge base and attractive research and development facilities.

Flagship programmes have been defined and a regional process has been initiated to translate these into concrete projects. *(By Dr John Mugabe, NEPAD adviser on science and technology)*

**** NEPAD recognises science and technology as engines of Africa's economic transformation and sustainable development. On the NEPAD platform African countries have two interrelated goals. The first goal is focused on building the capacity of African countries to collectively harness and apply science and technology for sustainable development. The second goal is to enhance their contribution to the global pool of science and technological development, and by establishing networks of centres of excellence in specific fields of science and technology.***

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Enthusiasm in Mauritius

for Peer Review

THE enthusiasm shown by Mauritius for the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) was welcomed by a Support Mission which visited Port Louis on 28 – 30 June 2004.

The Support Mission, which was led by Mourad Medelci (right), a member of the APR Panel of Eminent Persons, included two representatives from the APR Secretariat, and representatives from three Strategic Partner Institutions, the African Development Bank, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the UNDP Africa Bureau.

The purpose of the visit was to assess the processes and mechanisms put in place by Mauritius to undertake its self-assessment and draft its Programme of Action.

The Support Mission team held a preparatory meeting on 27 June to reach a common understanding on the conduct of the mission.

The team noted the progress made by Mauritius in implementing the APRM including the appointment of the National Economic and Social Council (NESC), an autonomous statutory entity, as the APR Focal Point for Mauritius, and the initiation of the consultative process with stakeholders.

A briefing session was held on 28 June with the National Economic and Social Council, under its Chairperson Dr Claude Ricaud, where the team received an update on the national process in Mauritius.

Courtesy calls were paid on various dignitaries in Mauritius including Vice-President Raouf Bundhun and the Prime Minister, Paul Raymond Berenger.

The leader of the Support Mission outlined the philosophy, objective and procedures of the APRM, and stressed that it was for peer learning and sharing of experiences.

He also emphasised the importance of broad-based participation by all stakeholders for the effective implementation of the APRM.

The government representatives underscored the commitment of the Government of Mauritius to the successful implementation of the APRM and peer learning among participating countries.

The Vice-President and the Prime Minister in particular reiterated the commitment of Mauritius to regional integration in Africa.

A national stakeholders workshop was held on 29 June, including heads of Government ministries and departments, representatives of the private sector, trade unions, academia, political parties and civil society organisations.

Dr Claude Ricaud noted that the Support Mission was the beginning of a long term exercise for the process of self assessment of participating countries.

This self assessment would include a process which is gradually being recognised as a core component of good governance -- the participation and contribution of civil society in the development programme of the country.

Presentations were made by members of the Support Mission in each of the four focus areas of the APRM: democracy and good political governance; economic governance and management; corporate governance; and social economic Development.

Stakeholders underscored the importance of the APR exercise and its participatory nature and emphasised the need to maintain the independence of the process. They provided feed back and sought clarification on the modalities for their participation including:

- the structure of the national coordinating body;
- procedures for distributing and for responding to the review questionnaire;
- enhancement of capacity to facilitate the process;
- raising awareness including through the media; and
- the drafting of the National Programme of Action.

A Memorandum of Understanding for the technical assessment mission and country review visit was signed on the 30 June by Mourad Medelci, on behalf of the APR Forum, and Jaya Krishna Cuttaree, Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Regional Cooperation, on behalf of the Government of Mauritius.

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AIDS, TB and malaria

NEPAD Health Strategy is a top priority

HEALTH is a prominent NEPAD priority -- recognising the social, economic and human impact of the huge burden of disease on the continent, in particular from AIDS, TB and malaria.

The goal of the NEPAD Health Strategy is to dramatically reduce the burden of disease, especially for the poorest people in Africa, with its targets set on those of the Millennium Declaration, to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.

The Health Strategy sets out to put Africa and its health systems and interventions on target to meet the 2015 goal.

It recognises the broader socio-economic and political factors that are at the root of much of the ill health on the continent and emphasises the contribution of other NEPAD strategies to addressing broader issues that are undermining health.

This includes addressing poor governance, socio-political instability, economic underdevelopment, poverty, marginalisation and displacement, lack of infrastructure, low educational levels, agricultural vulnerability and gender inequality, all of which undermine health.

The Health Strategy adopts a comprehensive integrated medium term approach.

It combines strengthening the vehicle needed to deliver programmes against the major burdens of disease – the health system -- with massive scaling up of disease control programmes, especially recognising the unprecedented challenge posed by HIV/AIDS.

The two are integral to one another – the one the vehicle, the other the suitcases to be delivered - and need to be supported by strengthened commitment and stewardship by Governments.

Furthermore the strategy stresses that health services and programmes against the major burdens of disease are too poorly funded to achieve the goals.

It is therefore essential that African countries commit increased proportions of public expenditure to health, towards the target of 15% set by the African Heads of State in Abuja in 2001.

This would strengthen the NEPAD position that development partners put a timetable to committing the US\$ 22 billion per annum in new partnership funding that is required.

The Strategy envisages projects making up an initial programme of action that will help to set the foundation for the medium term. In relation to HIV, these are to:

- Enhance prevention/promotion-related HIV programmes, in particular peer education programmes for vulnerable groups and those targeting youth.
- Advocate and support the provision of affordable anti-retroviral therapy (ART) and treatment of opportunistic infections in persons living with HIV/AIDS.
- Support the expansion of services for voluntary counselling and testing.
- Support the scaling-up of interventions for the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections.

As NEPAD itself is not an implementation agency its role is to continue to develop strategies and programmes and to facilitate, create focus and energy and to leverage. Core responsibility for implementation of NEPAD strategies lies with the African countries, who will need to incorporate the Health Strategy into their strategic plans.

A NEPAD partner (or partners) will act as a lead agency responsible for co-ordinating and supporting the effort towards implementation across the continent.

NEPAD's position on AIDS is further captured in the document the "Fight Against

AIDS” adopted by the NEPAD Steering Committee at the African Partnership Forum in Maputo on 16–17 April 2004.

To quote: “The HIV/AIDS epidemic is without doubt the biggest health challenge, its effects going beyond public health into every facet of the economy and society, inhibiting the achievement of the AU/NEPAD goal of sustainable development on the continent.

“Its direct cause is a virus, but its drivers are rooted in the poverty, marginalisation and lack of services that face Africa’s people every day.

“Societal features, such as the status of women, stigma about the disease, lack of social and health services and civil strife with its related population displacement are other major determinants of the epidemic.”

The document goes on to address issues of leadership, national plans, mainstreaming, gender, prevention, care and mitigation, strengthening health systems and funding.

The provision of affordable and sustainable anti-retroviral treatment has been a part of the NEPAD Health Strategy from the very first draft presented in 2001 in Abuja.

“The Fight Against AIDS” document notes that women are particularly vulnerable to the epidemic, not just biologically, but even more so economically, socially and culturally.

Nowhere is the truth of AIDS as a disease of poverty more evident than among women. This is compounded by weak social positions, rights violations and tolerance of abuse. About 58% of those infected in sub-Saharan Africa are women, with adolescent girls 3-4 times more likely to be infected than boys.

Agricultural development, workplace skill programmes and job opportunities for women are among the many gender sensitive poverty alleviation measures required to address the underlying economic determinants of the epidemic.

The document notes that at the same time as specific projects to address gender in AIDS are required and growing, there has been a tendency for them to become “boxed” into a gender corner. There is a need to ensure that gender is a golden thread in all sectors of the Fight Against AIDS and that more is done to put international commitments into place.

In the industrialised world HIV/AIDS has become a manageable public health problem; in Africa it is the leading cause of death, turning back decades of improvement in life expectancy.

To summarise, in sub-Saharan Africa:

- **Close to 30 million Africans are living with HIV.**
- **15 million Africans have died of AIDS.**
- **4 million of the more than 11 million AIDS orphans have lost both parents.**
- **Less than 2% of the 4 million people requiring antiretrovirals (ARVs) receive them.**
- **One in five women in Southern Africa are HIV positive, yet only 1%**

has access to antiretroviral drugs to prevent the transmission of HIV from mother to child (PMTCT).

- GDP is estimated to be 2.6% lower than it otherwise would have been in countries with a prevalence of over 20%.
- More than 80% of the continent depends on subsistence agriculture, yet families with a chronically ill head of household plant less than half the average number of crops.
- Nearly one million schoolchildren will lose a teacher this year due to AIDS.
- Up to half the hospital beds in severely affected countries are filled by AIDS patients.

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Calendar of events

- **7 - 9 July 2004**, Commonwealth Business Council and International Telecommunications Union (ITU) LDC Stakeholders' Forum & Summit on ICT - Mauritius
- **13 - 14 July 2004**, NEPAD Science and Technology Steering Committee Meeting - Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- **19 - 21 July 2004**, NEPAD French West Africa Editors' Workshop - Dakar, Senegal
- **22 - 23 July 2004**, NEPAD Follow-up Continental Advocacy Campaign Workshop - Dakar, Senegal
- **28 - 30 July 2004**, NEPAD ICT Broadband Infrastructure Workshop for Eastern and Southern Africa - Pretoria, South Africa

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Contact

General Manager - Communications and Outreach

Ms. Thaninga Shope-Linney
Tel: +27(0)11 313 3331
Fax: +27(0)11 313 3778

Manager – Publications and Editorial

Ms. Mundia Kunyanda
Tel: +27(0)11 313 3161
Fax: +27(0)11 313 3778

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Fax: +27 (0)21 671 1109
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