



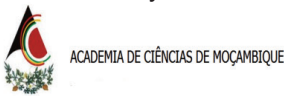
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Uganda



Zimbabwe

Declaration of the 9th Annual Meeting of African Science Academies (AMASA-9)

10-12 November 2013
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Declaration of AMASA-9

The 9th Annual Meeting of African Science Academies (AMASA-9)

held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 10-12 November 2013.

We, the undersigned African Science Academies, having deliberated on the relevance of biotechnology for development in Africa, during the 9th Annual Meeting of the African Science Academies (AMASA-9) held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 10-12 November 2013, hereby collectively issue the following ***'Declaration of AMASA-9'*** on ***"Biotechnology for Development in Africa"*** directed to Africa's policy makers, academics, legislators and relevant ministries such as Science and Technology, Agriculture, Health, and Environment.

PREAMBLE

- Whereas biotechnology is any technological application, traditional or modern, that exploits living organisms or substances from thereof to make or modify products or processes for specific end use, improve plants or animals, or develop microorganisms for specific purposes or applications;
- Whereas the African continent keeps missing opportunities to grasp technological revolutions for development as exemplified by the green revolution train bypassing Africa;
- Whereas biotechnology can be a powerful developmental tool to tackle food, health, and environmental problems of the African continent;
- Whereas conventional crop and livestock improvement strategies can significantly be augmented and made more efficient through the use of biotechnological methods;
- Whereas Africa is in urgent and dire need to break the seemingly perpetual cycle of hunger, malnutrition, and underdevelopment;
- Whereas the prudent and informed use of transgenic technology for Africa's agricultural development can pay robust dividends to the continent;
- Whereas focusing on improving Africa's biotechnology capacity development in human resources, equipment, and infrastructure is essential and best accomplished through a pool system organized by the continent's main regions;
- Whereas functional modalities of collaborations in biotechnological training, cost sharing, and operational agreements at the national, regional and continental levels are essential;

- Whereas African governments have to take aggressive actions to embrace modern and traditional biotechnology as necessary tools and practical options for Africa's development;
- Whereas the application of molecular and genomics tools in the characterization and documentation of Africa's indigenous plant and animal genetic resources can be a powerful tool to prevent biopiracy of Africa's genetic wealth;
- Whereas restrictive policy environments discourage the responsible use of biotechnology-mediated products in Africa; and
- Whereas ensuring African ownership of the biotechnology agenda and products, with African governments embracing this technology as a timely and functional tool for the continent's overall development, is essential.

HEREBY DECLARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. *Highlight the positive aspects of biotechnology without losing sight of the associated potential risks and challenges including its perceived threat to biodiversity and bio-safety concerns.*
2. *Uphold that biotechnology-enhanced tools and products can play a significant and positive role in meeting Africa's dire need and persistent challenge to break the seemingly perpetual cycle of hunger, malnutrition, and underdevelopment.*
3. *Observe that presently some available scientific evidence shows that Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are reasonably safe; hence African countries should encourage research on and utilization of GMOs as long as norms articulated in the existing international protocols and conventions such as the Biodiversity Convention, Cartagena, and Nagoya Protocols are adhered to.*
4. *Recognize and endorse the fact that four African countries (South Africa, Burkina Faso, Sudan and Egypt) are on the global list of the 30 Biotech Crop Producers and this should encourage other African countries to follow in the footsteps of these success stories.*
5. *Call on African countries to invest heavily on biotechnology and to accelerate Africa-wide capacity building both in human and infrastructure development, focusing on biotechnology education, overall capacity building, and infrastructure development, and urge African governments to invest generously in biotechnology training in their own universities both at the undergraduate and post-graduate levels.*
6. *Strongly recommend that African countries loosen the policy environment by enacting user friendly and country-specific legal frameworks with the proviso that Africa's biotechnology agenda should not be donor-driven, but rather national need-driven.*

7. *Urge African countries to develop and implement comprehensive national biotechnology policies and bio-safety laws appropriate to their own specific conditions but harmonized with Africa-wide and international norms.*
8. *Recommend that African governments and organizations should engage African Science Academies (ASA) to conduct thorough analysis of specific biotechnology-related issues in Africa to provide the foundation for evidence-based policy advice to educate key stakeholders with a view to creating and sustaining demand for constructive policies and investment in biotechnology. To this end, ASA should come up with a checklist of elements that should be considered for inclusion in a comprehensive biotechnology policy for African countries, out of which a model policy could be designed to promote investment and innovation in biotechnology in Africa.*
9. *Propose that Africa should establish and support functionally strong regional biotechnology networks and forge inter-country collaborations for capacity building in human resources, infrastructure, and facilities to meet the continent's various challenges in biotechnology.*
10. *Recommend that Africa should continue supporting and strengthening existing regional bioscience hubs such as Biosciences Eastern and Central Africa (BECA), North African Biosciences Network (NABNET), Southern Africa Network for Biosciences (SANBIO), West African Biosciences Network (WABNET), so that they will serve the continent as Centers of Excellence for the various aspects of biotechnology.*
11. *Recommend that African countries need to establish and/or endorse collaboratively Strategic Centers of Excellence for biotechnology in different regions of the continent with adequate equipment, operational facilities, and infrastructure to conduct state of the art biotechnology research and train top-notch African scientists. Such centers will have the required features where the merits of hands-on specialized training on specific methods and tools can best be illustrated.*
12. *Finally, we call on the African Union (AU), as the most important pan-African organization, to play a pivotal role in coordinating and overseeing the implementation of Africa's biotechnology agenda by providing the leadership and institutional support and by strengthening knowledge management and information sharing among African countries on biotechnology policy, practice, and capacity building.*