

WORKSHOP ON THE CONCEPT OF GLOBAL SCIENCE CORPS IN AFRICA

Held at the Hilton Hotel Nairobi, Kenya on
January 16-17, 2006

Presentation by:

PROF. G. B. A. OKELO

**Secretary General and Acting
Executive Director**

African Academy of Sciences



I. INTRODUCTION

- The purpose of this workshop is to examine closely the two focused components of the Global Science Corps (GSC) i.e.:
 - Placement of Diaspora scientists to their home countries for one year; and
 - South to South Component



- The purpose of this workshop is therefore to think through and design the specifics of how to carryout this programme. This thinking through process must take into account important issues such as the criteria, the responsibilities of the partners and the needs of the host institutions and even the post-partnership evaluation to see if it was worth the collaboration.



II. HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS

- Any discussions on partnerships or collaborations, be it North-South or South-South, usually tends to lead one to reflect on any past similar or nearly similar efforts as this may help refine our thoughts. In this regard, I will mention a few examples:



- Post-Independence Expatriate Collaboration:
- In Kenya, and many other former colonies, the UK and I believe France and Belgium signed agreements to enable experts to come and work or teach in some of our universities to help train and build capacity. In a number of these cases, the institutions and local staff did not improve their capacities. We should ask ourselves why and dig out for the causes. I remember some experts not wanting to enhance local capacity. Why? Lets all discuss this after my presentation, so as to avoid the pitfalls and so, as to avoid a bad legacy. No individual or institutional capacities were enhanced. There was no sincere sharing of experiences. No joint publication resulted.



Donor Aid with Experts:

- This also ended mostly with a bad legacy, as above.



III. PERSPECTIVES/ EXPECTATIONS

- So what are some of the issues that could be regarded as basic ingredients of our perspective, as African scientists? It is important to remember that in Africa today there is a considerable amount of local capacity that needs mostly enhancement for better and cost effective utilization for development. Below are some of the issues in our perspectives:



- Institutional capacity building.
- Individual capacity building
- Exchange of experiences
- Joint conceptualization and execution of research and training
- IPR issues in individual and institutional context
- Research and training targeting local societal needs.
- Joint publications.



- Help in creating the institutions as centres of excellence that would carry on after when the partnership is over.
- Strengthening satellite subject centres.
- African scientists in Diaspora placement in home countries.
- Stimulating and strengthening south-south collaboration.
- Targeting strategic regional centres such as having a centre in: East Africa, West Africa, South Africa, and Central Africa. There are institutions in these regions that could meet this criteria.



- The wide gap in the technological and scientific capacity between the North and South or so called “technology divide” incapacitate the South in terms of basic needs, participating in the global economy and managing the environment. The approach to reduce the gap is through international cooperation and use of ICT. International cooperation in S&T for development should be focused on problems of Africa. For example, joint North-South collaboration in biotechnological research should address diseases endemic in Africa. Important elements in collaboration include:
 - Building ICT infrastructure;



- Human capacity building in ICT related scientific and technical fields.
- Emphasizing the linkages between technology, knowledge generation and entrepreneurship with focusing on use of existing technologies.
- Emphasis on knowledge based economic development policies and programmes. This includes the need for leaders in Africa to embrace science advice.
- While south-south collaboration should be encouraged, it should not mutually exclude the use of the wider globalized knowledge as this will isolate the south further.



- These are just some of the issues that we may consider as we discuss during the workshop.



IV. POST-PARTNERSHIP EVALUATION

- If the partnership will have some clear objectives then some kind of evaluation may need to be put into it. Such an evaluation may be mid-term or post-partnership.



V. CONCLUSION

- Let us therefore give careful thoughts to this Global Science Corps (GSC) partnership before it starts.



THANK YOU,

