Brief report on the 2013 Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) residential school held in the UK, 8 – 12 August 2013

The 2013 ACU residential school was held in the United Kingdoms between 8 – 12 August 2013 and attracted postgraduate students from all corners of the commonwealth countries to engage in discussion of issues cutting across academic disciplines and national/ regional borders. The theme for the 2013 residential school was “The world in 2113”.

Professor Rolph Payet, Minister for Environment and Energy, Seychelles, and Pro-Chancellor of the University of Seychelles delivered the keynote address on what the world is likely to be in 2113 and the key drivers of change, which he named to include climate change, population growth, food, energy and water resources. He stressed the need to engage in critical thinking on how to address some of these challenges moving forward into 2113.

Participants asked questions ranging from world governance, sustainable natural resource management and citizenry participation.

The three-day event saw notable speakers actively engaging participants on various critical issues that are likely to face humankind in 2113, including trends in communication, the survival of different languages and cultures around the globe, the capacity of the brain to cope with the challenge of 2113, the probable nature of international development policy in 2113 and whether there will be a need for a gender policy. Other issues that were discussed include science and research, the role of students in shaping the commonwealth future and the “beyond 2015 campaign”. As the MDGs are set to expire by 2015, the beyond 2015 campaign is aimed at identifying evident-based key issues that must be addressed by global leaders and the role of universities in doing so.

At a personal level, I (Nelson Odume) found the residential school very engaging, and the opportunity as a rare one. Engaging some of the brightest young minds from around the commonwealth countries in critical issues facing our world today, and are likely to be presenting challenges to the future generations was very rewarding.

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