



Joint Statement to African Science Ministers and Heads of States and Governments by the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC)¹

Building science, technology and innovative capacities in Africa

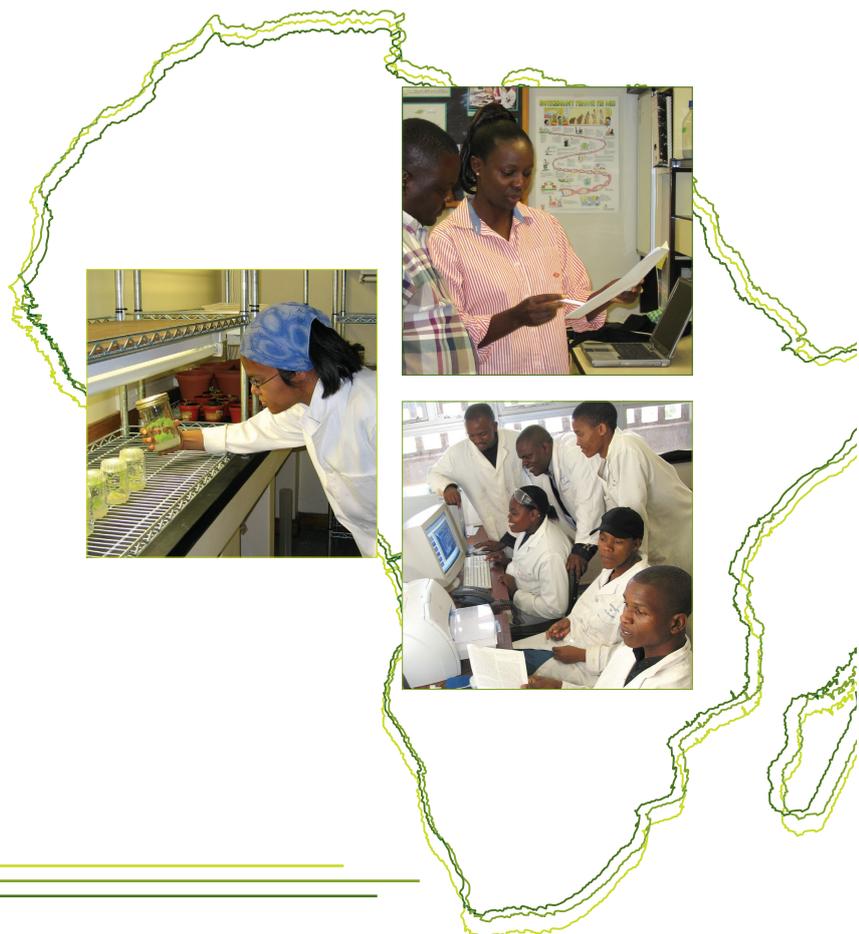
We the members of the Network of African Science Academies (NASAC) submit this statement for information and action to the meeting of Science and Technology Ministers (November 2006) and the subsequent summit of Heads of States and Governments on Science and Technology issues (January 2007).

We are convinced that unless national scientific and technological capacities become a central component of all nation- and continent-wide efforts to move Africa's economic development from a commodity or raw-material base to a knowledge base, the expected improvement in its economies or the quality of life of its peoples will be illusory.

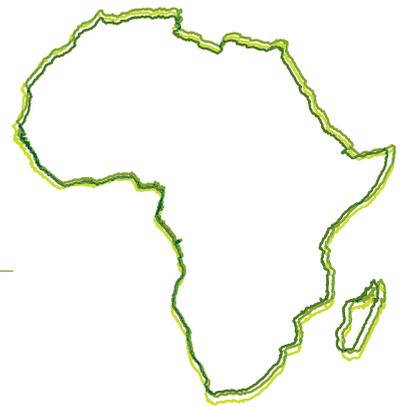
We appreciate the recent initiatives by Heads of States and Governments which have led to the establishment of the Science and Technology Commission of the African Union (AU) Secretariat and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Secretariat for Science and Technology, as part of the overall development strategy in the continent, and as a reflection of the political commitment to embrace the virtues of science-based economic development.

We recognise that governments throughout Africa are now committed to meeting the targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to reduce poverty, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases and enhance the prospects for environmental sustainability. We draw attention to the heightened need for national scientific communities to support these initiatives and meet these commitments. In this respect we strongly support the Declaration of the First African Congress of Scientists and Policy Makers held in Alexandria, Egypt in October 2006.

We believe that we are uniquely positioned to assist with leading the implementation of the Declaration by committing ourselves to increasing our capacities to provide credible, evidence-based advice on science and technology issues to the continent and our respective governments, which we recognize as becoming the core function of national science academies, working individually and as a network.



We make the following recommendations to our governments:



1. Engagement with local science communities

National governments should intensify their engagement and cooperation with their respective academies and scientific leadership not only to gather their advice on science and technological issues but also to ensure that the concerns and needs of the scientific community are effectively addressed.

2. Funding: National Science Foundations

National governments should aim at establishing a National Science Foundation or similar mechanism for ensuring adequate and effective funding of science. Transparent, merit-based, peer-review processes should be adopted to provide research grants to individuals or groups of researchers. Extensive systems of bursaries and fellowships should be instituted to develop new generations of researchers, with due regard for the gender issues.

3. Centres of Excellence

Policy should be directed to having at least one world-class university within each country, while additional funds should be invested in creating well-coordinated and cooperating national and regional centres of excellence in scientific fields of critical importance to African development.

4. Regional/International Cooperation

Governments should promote cooperation in science and technology, within and among African nations, and between African nations and other developing and developed nations.

5. Support National Science Academies

National governments should increase their support for existing merit-based, multidisciplinary and independent science academies. The academies can serve as preferred sources of professionally generated, independent advice on critical science-based development issues. To ensure that the scientific leadership in all African countries is an integral part of decision-making, governments should assist in the establishment of national science academies where these do not exist.

African Academy of Sciences

Nigerian Academy of Science

Uganda National Academy of Sciences

Cameroon Academy of Sciences

Academie des Sciences et Techniques du Senegal

Zambia Academy of Sciences

Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences

Academy of Science of South Africa

Zimbabwe Academy of Sciences

Kenya National Academy of Sciences

Sudan National Academy of Sciences

Madagascar National Academy of Arts, Letters, and Sciences

Tanzania Academy of Sciences

¹ NASAC members: African Academy of Sciences; Cameroon Academy of Sciences; Ghana Academy of Arts and Sciences; Kenya National Academy of Sciences; Madagascar National Academy of Arts, Letters, and Sciences; Nigerian Academy of Science; Academie des Sciences et Techniques du Senegal; Academy of Science of South Africa; Sudan National Academy of Sciences; Tanzania Academy of Sciences; Uganda National Academy of Sciences; Zambia Academy of Sciences; Zimbabwe Academy of Sciences.