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**PRESS RELEASE**

**Promotion of Academic Excellence in Africa: Ouagadougou Will Host the First Higher Education Fair on May 7, 2018**

*22 Centers of Excellence from West and Central Africa to present their research and development programs and innovations*

**Ouagadougou, 30 April 2018**. A Student Fair will be held on Monday 7 May 2018 in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, on the campus of the Institute of Water and Environmental Engineering (2iE) as part of the African Centers of Excellence (ACE) project financed by the World Bank.

The Fair will provide a unique platform for the promotion of current programs undertaken by 22 Centers of Excellence hosted by universities in 9 West and Central African countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo. The programs offered by the ACEs include post-graduate trainings (Master and Doctorate) in the fields of water, agriculture, health, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"*We are organizing this fair for the very first time to show the progress in higher education in Africa, and prove that young Africans can access advanced training in African universities and be internationally competitive*," said **Professor Etienne Ehilé, Secretary General of the Association of African Universities (AAU)**, the institution responsible for monitoring the implementation of the ACE project.

In addition to academics and students interested in pursuing their studies in the sectors covered, the opportunity will also be offered to actors from the private sector, industry, civil society, and others to discover the fields and results of research conducted by students from the ACEs, and to identify the extent to which they could forge useful and effective links and partnerships.

Currently, the researches conducted by the ACEs focus on the following sectors: (i) genomics and infectious diseases; (ii) water, energy and environment; (iii) agricultural development and environmental sustainability; (iv) cell biology of infectious pathogens; (v) neglected tropical diseases and forensic biotechnology; (vi) crop improvement; (vii) phytomedicine and development; (viii) reproductive health and innovation; (ix) mathematical sciences and applications; (x) oilfield chemicals; (xi) water and sanitation; (xii) poultry sciences; (xiii) information and communications technology; (xiv) maternal and child health; (xv) dryland agriculture; (xvi) food technology; (xvii) statistics; (xviii) climate change; (xix) mining; and (xx) materials science and engineering.

The African Centers of Excellence project is an innovative regional response to making higher education more relevant to Africa's development. It aims to strengthen the capacity of participating universities to offer training and undertake high-quality applied research to address the continent's development challenges.

The organizers of the Fair --2iE, AAU and World Bank - invite academic stakeholders, researchers, companies, industrialists, and the general public to actively participate in this first edition of the ACE Higher Education Fair in order to take advantage of the various exciting opportunities that will be presented.

**CONTACTS**

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***About the organizers***

***About 2iE.*** *The International Institute for Water and Environmental Engineering (2iE) is an international standard training and research institution grouping 16 countries and based in Burkina Faso. Its main missions are to train competent and innovative engineers-entrepreneurs capable of meeting the development challenges of the African continent, to offer continuing professional training options to executives and technicians in the private and public sectors, to conduct research and development programs for the private and public sectors, and to contribute to the development of scientific knowledge in the following fields: water and sanitation; civil and hydraulic engineering; electrical and energy engineering; environment and sustainable development; management and entrepreneurship. 2iE currently has nearly 1300 students of 30 nationalities, and a teaching staff of about 100 teachers and researchers from about twenty countries. 2iE is today a Center of Excellence accredited by the WAEMU, ECOWAS, NEPAD and the World Bank. 2iE's engineering degrees are accredited internationally, notably by the French “Commission des Titres d'Ingénieurs (CTI)” whose renewed accreditation in July 2015 for 5 years confers on 2iE's engineering degrees the equivalence of European “EUR-ACE” label. 2iE is also certified ISO 9001-2015 for its training.*

***About the Association of African Universities (AAU)****. The Association of African Universities (AAU) is an international non-profit non-governmental organization established by African universities to promote cooperation among themselves and between them and the international academic community. Created in 1956, AAU is the voice of higher education in Africa. It aims to improve the quality of African higher education, and to strengthen its contribution to Africa's development by supporting the core functions of higher education institutions and facilitating critical reflection and consensus-building on issues affecting higher education in Africa. AAU monitors the implementation of the African Centers of Excellence project, funded by the World Bank.*

***About the World Bank Group****. The World Bank Group is a multilateral development institution working to reduce poverty and build shared prosperity in developing countries. The International Development Association (IDA) –member of the World Bank Group which finances the African Centers of Excellence project— helps the world’s poorest countries by providing grants and low to zero-interest loans for projects and programs that boost economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve poor people’s lives. IDA is one of the largest sources of assistance for the world’s 77 poorest countries, 39 of which are in Africa. Resources from IDA bring positive change to the 1.3 billion people who live in IDA countries. Since 1960, IDA has supported development work in 112 countries. Annual commitments have averaged about $19 billion over the last three years, with about 50 percent going to Africa.*