

For immediate release

PRESS RELEASE

African Centers of Excellence converge in Djibouti from 18th to 27th February 2019 to strengthen research, development programmes and innovations

Djibouti, 17 February 2019. The first Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence (ACE I) project was launched in Western and Central Africa by the World Bank in 2014 to support higher education sectors specializing in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), agriculture and health. In 2016, the second ACE project (ACE II) was launched in Eastern and Southern Africa. The ACEs are an innovative regional response to make higher education more relevant to Africa's development.

As part of ACE I, 22 centers have been financed by the World Bank for a total amount of US\$165 million. These are currently being implemented in universities in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo and are producing excellent results. ACE II has 24 centers across Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia for an amount of US\$148 million. Based on the successes of ACE I and it being in its final year of implementation, the World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD) in collaboration with the African governments, have conditionally identified 44 ACEs (26 new ones and 18 from ACE I); 5 Emerging Centers; and 5 Colleges and Schools of Engineering for funding through a new phase called "ACE IMPACT" (pending both World Bank and AFD Boards of Directors approvals). The new project will be implemented in universities in 12 countries, all nine participating countries under ACE1 with three additional countries including Djibouti, Guinea and Niger. ACE Impact will strengthen post-graduate training and applied research in existing fields and support new fields that are essential for Africa's economic growth.

From 18 to 27 February 2019, the centers and their partners will meet in Djibouti for the inaugural ACE Impact workshop (a Bootcamp) to provide the platform for the centers to obtain guidance on project preparation, exchange information on their respective programs, build networks and forge partnerships to ensure the successful implementation of the project. It will also create an opportunity for the new ACEs to interact and learn from the existing centers. The ACE I centers will also have the opportunity to discuss ongoing activities and progress, share experiences and strengthen their impact on the continent's development challenges, as they work towards the closing of the ACE I project.

The event will be officially launched on Wednesday, February 20, 2019 at the Kempinski Hotel in Djibouti, starting at 8:30 am, while the rest of the activities will take place at the University of Djibouti. The event will be officially opened by the President of Djibouti, His Excellency Ismaïl Omar Guelleh.

Journalists wishing to cover the event are requested to register with Mr. Ahmed Souleiman Abdallah via email ahmed@univ.edu.dj to obtain their accreditation and receive the program.

Background information:

The existing 22 ACEs offer post-graduate training (Master's and Doctorate) in 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) plant medicine and development; (viii) reproductive health and innovation; (ix) mathematics and applications; (x) oilfield chemicals; water and sanitation; (xi) avian science; (xii) information and communication technology; (xiii) maternal and child health; (xiv) dryland agriculture; (xv) food technology; (xvi) statistics; (xvii) climate change; (xviii) mining; and (xix) materials science and engineering

Beside the above listed areas, the new ACE IMPACT also covers the following sectors: sustainable cities; sustainable power and energy; social sciences and education; transport; population health and policy; herbal medicine development and regulatory sciences; public health; applied informatics and communication; and pastoral production.

CONTACTS

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

- **About the Association of African Universities (AAU).** *The Association of African Universities (AAU) is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization created by African universities to promote cooperation between them on the one hand, and between them and the international academic community on the other. Created in 1967, the 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. The AAU is the Regional Facilitation Unit of the Africa Centres of Excellence project, funded by the World Bank.*
- **About the World Bank Group.** *The World Bank Group is a multilateral development institution that works to reduce poverty. Its subsidiary IDA (International Development Association), which finances the African Centres of Excellence project and was founded in 1960, provides interest-free grants and credits to the poorest countries to help them implement projects and programmes that stimulate economic growth, contribute to poverty reduction and improve the living conditions of the poor. IDA is one of the largest donors to the 77 poorest countries in the world, 39 of which are in Africa. IDA's resources concretely benefit 1.3 billion people. Since its inception, IDA has supported activities in 112 countries. The annual volume of its commitments has averaged \$19 billion over the past three years, with about 50 per cent of that amount going to Africa.*
- **About the French Development Agency.** *For more than 75 years, the French Development Agency (AFD) has been fighting global poverty by supporting policies and investments that benefit the poorest populations. Strengthening the social link between individuals, groups and territories is now at the heart of its action in education, health, employment, urban planning, climate or biodiversity, etc. For AFD, balanced development requires a real reduction in inequalities.*
- **About the University of Djibouti.** *Since its creation in 2006, the University of Djibouti has been involved in many national and international partnerships (Africa, Europe, America, Asia, Middle East, NGOs) formalizing its cooperation in research, training, mobility of teachers and students, distance education. To cope with its strong growth and best meet the requirements of its*

stakeholders, the University of Djibouti has since 2012, redesigned its vision and objectives. It aims to become:

- *A regional, multidisciplinary and multilingual university committed to transforming the country and the region*
- *A research university particularly in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) and Logistics*

The university also aims at:

- *excellence in teaching, research and innovation by attracting talents from the region*
- *quality training in line with international standards for young men and women*
- *preparing tomorrow's leaders for the challenges of the future.*