

## Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund launched with \$5 million commitment

As part of the World Bank 'Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET) programme, a 'Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund' has been launched by the President of the Republic of Senegal, HE Macky Sall, and representatives of the heads of states of Ethiopia and Rwanda.



L - R Dr Álvaro Sobrinho and HE Macky Sall,  
President of the Republic of Senegal

These were Shiferaw Shigutie, Minister of Education of Ethiopia; Louise Mushikiwabo, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Rwanda; and Prof Mary Teuw Niane, Minister of Higher Education & Research of Senegal and Chairman of the PASET Steering Committee. The heads of state of these three governments will now sign a formal declaration.

PASET will award grants for 10,000 PhD scholarships in Africa over 10 years, to strengthen research and innovation in applied science, engineering and technology.

The African governments involved are alongside a new group of prominent business figures, the 'Africa Business Champions for Science', which is chaired by the Angolan businessman Dr Álvaro Sobrinho, also Chairman of the Planet Earth Institute. Additional funds will now be mobilised from African governments, business leaders and other developmental partners, to operationalise the fund by June 2016.

The overall objective of PASET is to accelerate the creation of a skilled, high-quality workforce in Africa to power Africa's socio-economic transformation. The launch of the Fund is an outcome of the actions agreed at the previous PASET Forum's held in Ethiopia (2013) and Senegal (2014), as well as the related Forum on Higher Education, Science and Technology held in Rwanda (2014).

The World Bank reaffirmed its support to the PASET objectives and its readiness to continue to support the initiative. According to the World Bank, after a decade of exceptional growth in Africa, averaging 4.5% a year across the continent, it is necessary to build skills to sustain this growth and transform African economies towards higher levels of competitiveness. Currently the African workforce greatly suffers from a lack of scientific and technical capacity and an integrated approach that brings together all partners - public and private, traditional and emerging partners - is needed.

"Increasingly, Africa sees the need to depend on science and technology to increase industrial and agricultural productivity, guarantee food security, tackle diseases, ensure a safe water supply and reduce the energy deficit. While these may seem like insurmountable challenges, the continent cannot waste any more time," says Sall.

"We must launch a sustained campaign to train and employ a great number of scientists, engineers, and technicians to achieve the structural transformation that Africa needs, and that is exactly what this programme is designed to help support."

Sobrinho adds, "As Africa continues to make great strides forward, we must also continue to recognise the importance of investing in our future generations. This investment must go beyond access and enrolment to develop excellence, too, especially in science and technology. Excellence in science and technology will equip Africa with a workforce ready to compete in the 21st century, where we can lead the world as scientists, engineers and innovators.

"As Chairman of the African Business Champions for Science, I confirm my commitment to this agenda and to recruiting others that share the vision. Led by the African governments and in partnership with business leaders and the World Bank, we want to go beyond philanthropy to find innovative ways to properly link industry with scientific and technical excellence for the long-term, and for the benefit of us all."

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