THE SECOND SCIENCE CONGRESS OF THE ETHIOPIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (EAS) CONVENED

The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Science Congress of EAS on "Re-envisioning higher education and research in Ethiopia" was held 26-27 November 2015 at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, Africa Hall. The objective of the Congress was to provide policy recommendations to improve quality of higher education and research capacity in Ethiopia. The Congress was officially opened by H.E. Ato Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Presentations and Round Table discussions were held under the following four sub-themes: Creation of Critical Minds and the Academic Environment of Universities; Curricula Relevance and Graduate Employability; The Making of Research-intensive Universities; and Leadership and Participatory Governance in Ethiopian Universities.

The Congress adopted a twelve-point Declaration on revitalizing and enhancing quality of higher education and research in Ethiopia which is expected to contribute to policy formulation.

The Congress was jointly organized by the Ministry of Science and Technology, Ministry of Education, the Strategic Education Center, the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences and Unity University. More than one hundred eighty participants, including presidents and vice-presidents of public and private universities, Fellows of EAS, members of the Ethiopian Young Academy of Sciences, and professionals from various government and non-government institutions, attended the Congress.
EAS convened its Fourth General Assembly on 24 October at the Headquarters of the Academy. The Assembly inducted 10 Fellows and 4 Associate Fellows who were elected in 2014. A total of 16 new Fellows and 10 Associate Fellows were also elected for EAS Fellowship.

Ato Wudu Techane, representing Wudu Techane & Co. Chartered Certified Accountants & Authorized Auditors, presented independent Auditor’s report on the Accounts of the Academy. Prof. Masresha Fetene, the Executive Director of EAS, presented the Annual Report 2014/2015 (8 July 2014 – 7 July 2015). Both the Auditor’s and Annual reports of the Academy were approved by the General Assembly.

In the afternoon, Fellows of EAS and EtYAS had a joint session to officially launch EtYAS. Dr.-Ing. Getahun Mekuria, Director General of Ministry of Science and Technology, gave Certificate of Membership to the Founding Fellows of EtYAS, and delivered a speech, heralding the official launching of EtYAS.

Prof. Woldeamlak Bewket, President of EtYAS and Fellow of EAS, gave the Annual Induction Lecture of 2015 under the title ‘Is Ethiopia adapting to Climate Change?’

A delegation led by Ato Abiy Ahmed, Minister, Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST), paid a working visit to EAS on 18 November 2015.

Prof. Masresha Fetene made a brief presentation on the programs and activities of the Academy and outlined its major achievements and challenges. Finally, he conveyed his heartfelt appreciation for the unreserved support the Ministry has provided to the Academy.

Minister Abiy Ahmed expressed his hope that the working relationship between the Ministry and the Academy would further strengthen during his term in office. He indicated that the Government has high expectations of the Academy and suggested that it build its capacity to meet the expectations of the Government and that of society.

Prof. Afework Kassu, State Minister of MoST, mentioned some of the potential areas in which the Ministry can cooperate with the Academy, and also underscored the Government’s high expectations of the Academy.

Prof. Demissie Habte, President of EAS, and Prof. Masresha praised the Ministry for the attention it has thus far given to the Academy.
The Ethiopian Academy of Sciences organized a one-day Symposium under the theme of “Nature and qualities of Traditional Education: Lessons for Modern Education” on 25 November 2015 at the EAS Headquarters. The purpose of the Symposium was to explore, analyze and underscore the potential contributions of traditional education to modern education and scholarship in Ethiopia.

In his introduction Professor Shiferaw Bekele, Coordinator of the Symposium, stated that the country had not thus far benefited from both Christian and Islamic traditional education systems and he hoped that the Symposium will contribute to further research on both aspects of traditional education systems.

Ato Yohannes Demiss, Dr Semu Mitiku, Dr Mersha Alehegn, Dr Zelalem Meseret, Dr Wube Kassaye and Ato Abdulmelik Abubeker presented papers on the various components of traditional education which inspired a discussion on how to integrate traditional education into the country’s modern education systems.

About one hundred participants, drawn from Fellows of EAS, members of the Ethiopian Young Academy of Sciences, university students, researchers, and professionals from various government and non-government institutions, attended the Symposium.

The Ethiopian Young Academy of Sciences (EtYAS), established under the auspices of EAS in January 2015, held its First General Assembly on 24 October 2015 at EAS Headquarters.

After deliberations on the agenda, the Assembly approved the Constitution, a three-year Strategic Plan, and the logo of EtYAS. Furthermore, the Assembly discussed the future direction of EtYAS.

There was also an active brainstorming session titled ‘Creativity, Academies and Society’ facilitated by students, representing the Youth Alliance for Leadership of the Addis Ababa University.

The Network of African Science Academies (NASAC), in collaboration with the Inter American
Network of Academies of Science (IANAS), the Inter-Academy Partnership (IAP) and UNESCO, organized a workshop entitled, “Improving the Management of Water Resources for Sustainable Development in Africa and the Americas” at the Hilton Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya, 12-15 October 2015.

The main objectives of the Workshop were: to take stock of the relevant issues in water for the African and the American continents; to share experiences and exchange ideas on how science can influence water policy in Africa through regional networks (NASAC and IANAS); to maximize circulation of and reference to NASAC’s policymakers booklet entitled, “The Grand Challenge of Water Security in Africa: Recommendations to Policymakers;” to facilitate dialogue between scientists and policy makers and seek better mechanisms for continuous engagement; and to encourage national uptake of policy advice on water emanating from regional level through NASAC and IANAS.

The six main sessions of the Workshop, under which 23 papers were presented and panel discussions held, covered Eutrophication and Wastewater Management; Water; and Climate Change Adaptation; Water, and Models for Integrating Science Advice into STI Policies for Water.

The Workshop provided an effective platform for sharing experiences and exchanging ideas on how science can influence water policy in Africa. It also enabled dialogue between scientists and policymakers to seek better mechanisms for continuous engagement. The dialogue was enriched by the presence and active participation of the eight participants from the Americas and the UK.

The Workshop was attended by 54 participants (academy members, scientists, policy makers, researchers and experts) from Africa and the Americas. Dr Brhane Gebrekidan, V/President of EAS; Dr Seifu Tilahun, Global Young Academy, Bahir Dar University; Prof. Seyoum Leta, Addis Ababa University; and Prof. Woldeamlak Bewket, Addis Ababa University, participated in the Workshop representing Ethiopia.

EAS MONTHLY PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES
1. HEALTHY SOILS FOR A HEALTHY LIFE

Prof. Tekalign Mamo, founding Fellow of EAS and Special Global Ambassador of UN FAO for 2015 International Year of Soils, delivered the First EAS Public Lecture on Thursday, 8 October 2015 at the Auditorium of Addis Ababa Institute of Technology (AAiT), under the title, ‘Healthy Soils for a Healthy Life.’

The Public Lecture brought home to the audience that soil is the basis of life as it is a source of food, water and air for all forms of life. Soil resources of the world have never gained enough attention, as a result they have been vulnerable.
to a serious threat. Complexity of soil problems in Ethiopia emanated from declining soil fertility due to erosion; the acidity of soil; salty soil; dependency on two types of fertilizers (Urea and DAP) for the last four and half decades; paucity of data on soil resources and soil fertility; and lack of soil policy at the national level.

2. MENTAL HEALTH IN ETHIOPIA

Prof. Atalay Alem, a renowned Psychiatrist and EAS Fellow, presented the Second EAS Public Lecture under the theme: Mental Health and Mental Disorders in a broader perspective.

Prof. Atalay reflected on the causes of mental disorders (biological, psychological and socio-economical); types of mental disorders; common mental disorders; severe mental disorders; and treatment and prevention. He also gave an overview of mental disorders in Ethiopia focusing on modern mental health care services and scientific research and future directions.

Prof. Atalay noted that mental health is a concern for all members of society and efforts should begin with creating awareness among the general public in a platform such as the one EAS has created.

3. PLATE TECTONICS AND OCEAN CREATION IN ETHIOPIA

Dr Atalay Ayele, Fellow of EAS and Director of the Institute of Geophysics, Space Science and Astronomy at Addis Ababa University, delivered the third EAS Public Lecture on Plate Tectonics and Ocean Creation in Ethiopia. The presentation revolved around the nature of planet Earth and other planets; plate tectonics; and footmarks and signals of ocean creation in Ethiopia.

In his presentation, Dr Atalay pointed out that plate tectonics have been stark realities of the past. They are occurring at the present and will be features of the Earth in the future. The East Africa Rift Valley, of which the Ethiopia Rift valley is part and parcel, is one of the major rift valleys of the world, where plate tectonics have been going on for millions of years. Dr Atalay suggested that construction developments, that are underway in major cities of Ethiopia, should consider these phenomena so that structures withstand and/or casualties and damages that may occur as a result are minimized.

Dr Atalay also said that there are signals that indicate the creation of an ocean in millions of years in the Afar Region. The change has been taking place in slow magnitude. However, as it affects the life of humans, Dr Atalay suggested that we should study and be aware of the phenomenon as a reality.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- December 31, 2015 — The Fourth EAS Public Lecture on Climate Change in Ethiopia: What does it mean living with 2°C more warming in Ethiopia.
- January 14, 2016 — A Workshop on the Status of Green Technologies in Ethiopia organized by EAS and the Academy of Science
of South Africa (ASSAF).

- January 15-16, 2016 a regional Conference on *Inspiring and empowering women scientists/scholars for active engagement in their professional career*, jointly organized by EAS, the Ethiopian Association of Humboldt Fellows (EAHF) and the Society of Ethiopian Women in Science & Technology (SEWiST).

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