



AFRICAN ACADEMIC DIASPORA VIRTUAL HOMECOMING 2020



Dear Invited Guest,

The Association of African Universities (AAU), in partnership with the African Union (AU) and the Government of Ghana, is inviting all educational stakeholders to the first Virtual African Academic Diaspora Homecoming, scheduled to take place from **28th -30th September 2020**. The overall objective of the Homecoming is to strengthen collaboration and partnership among research and educational institutions of higher learning in Africa and the Diaspora to advance quality of education for all persons of African descent. The event is intended to be a major gathering of academics, policy makers, professional associations, research institutions, regional diplomatic missions and student associations from Africa and the diaspora.

A. Theme and Sub-Themes

The main theme is ‘**Advancing African and Diaspora Academic Relations**’. The following sub-themes have also been identified:

ST1: Role of the Diaspora in Higher Education and Innovation in Africa

This session seeks to highlight the *ongoing, and potential*, innovative relationships between institutions of higher education across Africa, and African diaspora academics who seek to promote academic exchanges and collaborations to internationalize and strengthen the capacities of African universities. Africa has an estimated 1,950 higher education institutions, many of them facing challenges that require the intervention of various stakeholders, national governments, and development partners for the students to maximize their learning outcomes and contribute effectively to the workforce. Many of these institutions have gone into decline in terms of the quality of teaching, research, and research output. It is important that this session explores challenges and prospects of higher education in Africa and strategies to address these challenges under 3 thematic areas:

Technology and Digital Platforms in Teaching and Learning: The Corona Virus Pandemic (Covid-19)’s disruption of the academic calendar of most African universities is a clarion call for African universities to innovate around the use of technology to keep their learning doors open. Technology is transforming and disrupting all sectors and higher education is no exception. Technology ushers in fundamental structural changes that can be integral to achieving significant improvements in teaching and learning. Technology infuses classrooms with digital learning tools, expands course offerings, experiences, and learning materials; supports learning 24 hours a day, *seven* days a week; builds 21st century skills; increases student engagement and motivation; and accelerates learning. Technology also has the power to transform teaching by ushering in a new

model of connected teaching. This session again, must highlight the importance of the role of technology in the facilitation of teaching and learning.

The Funding of African Higher Education: A major challenge bedeviling African higher education is funding. This may not be peculiar to Africa as most countries in the world are struggling to provide the necessary resources for Higher Education. However, the challenges are particularly complex for poor countries in Africa, especially those which have recorded massive population expansion in the past decade. Financing higher education is an expensive enterprise — knowledge creation, knowledge dissemination and innovation do not come cheap. It is therefore impeccable for this session to explore innovative ways and funding streams to support intuitions of higher learning in Africa.

Transnational Education: Prospects and Challenges: Transnational Education (TNE) refers to the provision of education from institutions in one country to students in another. In the last couple of years, Africa has been gaining traction in terms of transnational education. *This* includes a diverse range of models from traditional branch campuses to blended-learning models. TNE has potential for expanding access to higher education in Africa, which has chronic high rates of unmet demand for access. This session seeks to understand existing models of TNE operating in Africa and its contribution to Africa’s educational development.

ST2: Strengthening relationships between US Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and African Universities

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were established to serve the educational needs of black Americans. Prior to their establishment, and for many years afterwards, blacks were generally denied admission to traditionally white institutions. As a result, HBCUs became the *principal* means for providing postsecondary education to black Americans. Today, HBCUs must fulfil educational goals far beyond those initially set. Some have established collaboration with African universities on the continent. This session will explore existing and emerging relationships between HBCU and African universities on the continent in terms of teaching, learning, research, students and faculty exchanges, joint degrees, among others.

ST3: Women of African Descent in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges:

This session seeks to highlight gender inequality in academia and explores how higher education institutions both in Africa and Diaspora can create greater opportunities for women in higher education by eliminating all gender-based barriers. The importance of higher education as the central site for facilitating the skills, knowledge and the expertise that are essential to economic and social development in low income countries has been well documented by UNESCO, the World Bank, and other multilateral bodies. And, gender-balanced human resource development is seen as pivotal to ensuring that higher education institutions meet the challenges of contemporary society. In spite of this, higher institutions in Africa and Diaspora continue to be male-dominated and women, especially those from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds, have a very low presence in these institutions especially at highest decision-making level. The session will provide the conference with successful and contemporary models in increasing women’s participation in higher education for sustainable development worldwide.

ST4: Higher Education: A Panacea to Racism, Equity and Promoting Social Justice

Systemic racism (also called Institutional Racism) is a form of racism that is embedded as normal practice within society or an organization which leads to issues such as discrimination in criminal

justice, employment, housing, health care, political power, and education, among other issues. While individual racism is often identifiable because of its overt nature, systemic racism is less perceptible because of its less overt, far more subtle nature. Systemic racism originates in the operation of established and respected forces in the society and has generally received far less scrutiny and less public condemnation than individual racism but can be far more pervasive. Issues of racism and social justice have come to the forefront globally following the brutal killing of George Floyd in Minnesota (USA). The incident drew global condemnation and brought to light the need for systemic changes in social, economic, political, and criminal justice systems. The session will explore the role of higher education in ending racism, promoting social justice and the need for solidarity among all persons of African descent to collectively fight these injustices.

B. African Diaspora

The African diaspora consists of the worldwide collection of communities descended from native sub-Saharan Africans in the Americas and other parts of the world. They include people of African descent who live outside continental Africa, having been dispersed around the world through colonialism, the transatlantic slave trade or voluntary migration. In the words of the African Union Charter, these are “*people of African origin living outside the continent, irrespective of their citizenship and nationality and who are willing to contribute to the development of the continent and the building of the African Union*”.

The *African Union ECHO (AU-ECHO) 2013* sees Pan-Africanism as a unifying concept that seeks the unification of all people of African descent in an attempt to initiate collective actions toward their emancipation from the unending ills of the European slave trade, colonialism, and neo-colonialism. The objective is social development for self-reliance and dignity. Godfrey N Uziokwe, a Pan-Africanist writer views Pan-Africanism as ‘a political movement initiated by peoples of African descent in the Americas, and later taken over by continental Africans, which aims to liberate all Africans and people of African descent from the shackles of political, economic, cultural, and intellectual domination’. It emphasizes the need for the Africans in the continent and Africans in the diaspora to come together for their mutual benefit.

Throughout history, the Pan-Africanist movement has supported the campaign to eradicate colonialism in Africa. This movement was spearheaded by the African diaspora who played a strong role in the struggle for independence and self-rule by Africans. People like Jamaican-born Marcus Garvey coined the term ‘United States of Africa’ as early as 1924 to call for the unity of Africans involved in the struggle to emancipate people of African descent.

C. Engaging the African Diaspora

The role of Africans in the diaspora in transformative change has a long history and has long been recognized. Kwame Nkrumah who led Ghana to independence in 1957 acknowledged the extraordinary contribution of people of African origin in the diaspora as early as 1958 at the first Pan-African Congress. He stated that “...many of them have made no small contribution to the cause of African freedom. Names which spring immediately to mind in this connection are those of Marcus Garvey, and W.E.B. Du Bois. Long before many of us were even conscious of our own degradation, these men fought for African national and racial equality.”

Pan-Africanist writers argue that the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was formed in 1963 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia by Nkrumah, Haile Selassie, and others partly due to the inspiration they received from the Diasporic Pan African Movement. With the transition of the OAU into the AU

in 2001, the role of the African diaspora was formally defined by Article 3 (q) of the AU's Constitutive Act Amendments which states that it shall "*invite and encourage the full participation of the African diaspora as an important part of our Continent, in the building of the African Union*".

In 2003, at the end of the AU Summit, the African Union symbolically declared the diaspora to be its sixth region as a way to recognize its political, economic and strategic importance and the unique role it is playing in Africa's development.

According to the diaspora *initiative* within the framework of the AU, the diaspora can be of great benefit to the AU through:

- technical support for programmes of the African Union;
- public education and sensitization of the wider public in their respective regions;
- lobbying;
- provision of a domestic political constituency for AU goals and objectives;
- advocacy;
- fundraising and resource mobilization; and,
- resource support through such measures as creation of endowment funds, among other things.

Others continue to recognize the unique role the diaspora is playing in promoting Africa's development. Mr. Carlos Lopes, one-time Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, acknowledged the role played by the African Diaspora. At a session with various civil society stakeholders on the theme, '*Framing a 21st Century Narrative on Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance*', he remarked: "We have to recognize the key role of the African Diaspora in promoting this ideal and the role played by leaders and intellectuals such as Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois and George Padmore,"

Today, the African diaspora is serving as a focal point for rebuilding the global African family and has championed numerous developmental initiatives at the continental level. Within academia, many African diaspora academics are making invaluable contribution within the diaspora and across the African continent. African diaspora academics represent a huge asset for the continent in meeting the challenges of African higher education. Collaboration between African and academic institutions in the diaspora has led to the revitalization of some universities within continental Africa. Through teaching, research, public service, faculty exchanges, mentorship programs, knowledge transfer, intellectual remittances, diaspora academics have become indispensable players in Africa's rapidly growing and increasingly diversified education sector.

The expanding use of information technology in academia has created new avenues to facilitate the involvement of the diaspora in academic initiatives on the continent. The technology now makes it possible to promote virtual teaching and explore new pedagogical options. Through technology, diaspora academics are promoting online teaching and learning, virtual faculty exchange, implementation of learning management systems, research collaboration, and the use of various classroom technologies in teaching and learning.

D. The African Higher Education Summit

The strategic importance of higher education in nation building has prompted the African Union to adopt many higher education initiatives. The 1st African Higher Education Summit held in Dakar in March 2015, an initiative of the AU and 12 key pan-African and international organizations, brought together governments, the private sector, civil society, education leaders

and diaspora representatives from various parts of the continent and the diaspora. They discussed future and the revitalization of African higher education to realize Agenda 2063 of the African Union Commission.

The goals of that conference were: building a constituency for transformation and investment in Africa's higher education; creating a shared vision for the future of African higher education; harnessing and highlighting exemplary efforts and initiatives in African higher education; and harnessing disparate efforts and interventions in African higher education.

At the end of the conference, the Declaration and Action Plan from the Summit outlined eight objectives. The eighth objective of the plan emphasized the need to Mobilize the Diaspora by developing a '10/10 programme' to sponsor 1,000 scholars in the African diaspora across all disciplines every year, for 10 years, to African universities and colleges for collaboration in research, curriculum development, and graduate student teaching and mentoring.

On November 13-14, 2019, the African Union Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO) partnering with Carleton University Institute of African Studies hosted a follow-up Continental Forum on the Role of the Diaspora in Higher Education Research and Innovation hosted at AU headquarters in Addis Ababa. One of the recommendations of that Forum was for the AU to support a Consortium for African Diaspora Fellowship Programmes, to meet the huge demand by African institutions for diaspora academics and the need to implement similar programmes that will help build the capacity of African institutions of higher learning through creative collaboration.

E. The Continental Education Strategy for Africa

Following the success of the Dakar conference, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA), dubbed CESA 2016-2025 was launched. CESA 16-25 is a continental strategy that matches the 2016-2025 framework of the African Union Agenda 2063. It seeks to “reorient Africa's education and training systems to meet the knowledge, competencies, skills, innovation and creativity required to nurture African core values and promote sustainable development at the national, sub-regional and continental levels” for education, science and technology. It outlines twelve strategic goals as they relate to the role of the diaspora in higher education, scientific research, and innovation in Africa among other objectives.

The diaspora's involvement in higher education on the African continent continues to grow as well. This calls for the need to formulate clear direction and framework that will lead to a stronger engagement with diaspora academics. The revitalization of higher education in Africa is a shared responsibility between government, the business community, and academic stakeholders at home and in the diaspora. An initiative in this direction will help improve upon the various ongoing diaspora programmes within academic institutions in Africa.

The Africa Academic Diaspora Virtual Homecoming 2020 aims to build on the 2015 Action Plan and the successes of the Dakar conference, the Carnegie African Diaspora Fellowship Program (CADFP) and the educational objectives outlined by CESA 16-25 by bringing together academics, policymakers, professional associations, research institutions, regional education and economic communities, development partners, diplomatic missions and student associations from Africa and the diaspora to explore critical educational issues confronting the continent.

F. Language (s)

All presentations will be in English with simultaneous interpretation in French and Arabic.

G. Registration

Kindly register via <https://cutt.ly/Bo9XWFz>

H. Homecoming Events

- **Plenary Sessions**

Plenary Sessions will feature keynote addresses and also reports from parallel sessions.

- **Parallel Sessions**

These sessions will feature keynote speakers and panel discussions. They also provide for feedback sessions with the audience.

I. Programme Outline

Time: Daily activities starts at 15:00GMT. Kindly convert the time to your local time. Choice of time is to enable participants from West Coast of the America's to join.

Kindly refer to the programme outline attached for full details.

J. Contact Details

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