

Press Statement

The African Academy of Sciences (AAS) and the International Organization for Chemical Sciences in Development (IOCD) today 16 August 2012 announced the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding. In a joint statement the Presidents of the two organizations warmly welcomed the increased opportunities for collaboration that this agreement signals, especially in strengthening education, research, practice and policy-making in science and technology and promoting its use to tackle major challenges of the 21st century.

Based in Kenya, AAS was created in 1985 through the initiative of the Third World Academy of Sciences (later the Academy of Sciences for the Developing World). One of its primary functions is to honour African science and technology achievers in Africa. It also acts as a development-oriented mobilizer of the entire African science and technology community to facilitate the development of scientific and technological capacity for science-led development in Africa, promoting excellence and relevance in doing so. Professor Berhanu Abegaz was appointed Executive Director of AAS in 2011. An Ethiopian chemist, he previously worked at the University of Botswana, where he established the Network for Analytical and Bio-assay Services in Africa (NABSA) with assistance from IOCD.

Registered in Belgium and with an affiliate in the USA, IOCD was established in 1981 under the auspices of UNESCO, as the first international non-governmental organization devoted to enhancing the role of the chemical sciences in development and involving chemists in low- and middle-income countries, including those in Africa, enabling them to contribute to key science and technology areas for development. Over a number of years it has conducted work in environmental analytical chemistry, plant chemistry, biodiversity, medicinal chemistry and chemical education. It has also supported the development of analytical chemistry capacity in low- and middle-income countries, especially in Africa. Professor Alain Krief was appointed Executive Director of IOCD in 2010. A Belgian chemist at the University of Namur, his fields of work include synthetic organic chemistry and knowledge-based computer systems for enhancing chemical education and practice.

Strong ties between IOCD and Professor Abegaz (including as a member of IOCD's Senior Advisory Council and head of NABSA) led to an exploration of opportunities for collaboration when he assumed his new role in AAS. The value of combining expertise and knowledge was highlighted when IOCD was invited to provide an input to a major publication being planned by the scientific publishers Wiley- VCH to mark the 2011 International Year of Chemistry. It was agreed that the input would be authored by Professor Stephen Matlin (one of IOCD's longest serving members) and Professor Abegaz. Their contribution 'Chemistry for Development' (available for downloading at www.thechemicalelement.com) forms the opening chapter of 'The Chemical Element: Chemistry's Contribution to Our Global Future' edited by J. Garcia-Martinez and E. Serrano-Torregrosa and released in April 2011. The book has been extremely well received and has been given the accolade of patronage by UNESCO. Offering her personal congratulations, UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova said that the book will "contribute to the objectives of the 2011 International Year of Chemistry by promoting a better appreciation and understanding of chemistry among the public and young people". She also noted that the "focus on the critical areas addressed by the Millennium Development Goals makes this work even more relevant to today's society".

Building on this work, AAS and IOCD will now embark on a process of strategic collaboration. This will include further joint publications in diverse media and the two organizations will also seek opportunities for collaboration in a range of events and programmes. IOCD and AAS have a shared interest and common purpose in strengthening scientific and technological capacity for science-led development. IOCD's President, the French Nobel Laureate Jean-Marie Lehn, said, "with this formal agreement in place, we will be seeking practical ways for the two organizations to collaborate and add value to what each is doing. The aim is to reinforce the impact of our work and ensure that science and technology make their full contribution to development in Africa and elsewhere".

For further information about the two organizations, see:
www.aasciences.org
www.iocd.org

S.A Matlin. 16 August 2012