

PROGRESS REPORT OF ICSU ROA (June 2005-April 2008)

Part I: Establishing of the ICSU Regional Office in Africa

ICSU ROA was inaugurated on 01 September 2005 in Pretoria and the Hon. Mr. Mosibudi Mangena (MP), Minister of Science and Technology of South Africa officiated at this well-attended ceremony. Over 200 delegates, including ministers, diplomats, scientists, policymakers young scientists, representatives of the ICSU family (and its partners) and the President of ICSU attended the event which was covered by both local (South Africa) and international broadcast and print media.

ICSU ROA secretariat is functioning innovatively, efficiently and its quality products are highly appreciated and recognized in Africa and in other parts of the world. It is funded by the Government of South Africa through the National Research Foundation (NRF).

Part II: Implementation of the ICSU Strategic Plan 2006-2011

The main activities for this Strategic Plan will evolve around: (i) International research collaboration, (ii) science for policy, (iii) the universality of science and (iv) ICSU structure and membership.

After, the 28th ICSU GA in China in October 2005, ICSU ROA is one of the ICSU organs that have registered measurable success in the implementation of its Strategic Plan. Below is the summary of the achievements:

(II a) International Research Collaboration:

ICSU Regional Committee for Africa (ICSU RCA) identified 4 priority areas for sub-Saharan Africa and ICSU ROA has successfully coordinated and managed the preparation, publication, dissemination of the 4 concomitant science plans, and the commencement of their implementation is at a very advanced stage. The following has been done:

- (i) Publication and regional (Africa) and global (e.g., ICSU family and its partners) distribution of 3 science plans on **Sustainable Energy, Natural and Human-induced Hazards and Disasters; and Health and Human Well-being** has already been excellently done. The fourth science plan on **Global Environmental Change (including climate change and adaptation) in Africa** is at its final stage of editorial work and should be available by the end of April 2008.
- (ii) Preparation of large-scale, long-term and high-quality project proposals described in the published science plans is coming to completion. The Task Teams working on these projects met in Pretoria on 17-18 March 2008 and final projects' documents should be available by the end of March 2008.

The projects in the making (final stage) are:

SE 01: Development of energy models and scenarios for sub-Saharan Africa,

SE 02: Renewable Energies – Biofuels for Africa (electronic library and knowledge network in biofuels; biofuels technology – quality, characterization footprint; and adaptation)

HD 01: Geohazards in sub-Saharan Africa (within the framework of the UN-proclaimed International Year of Planet Earth), and

HD 02: Hydro-meteorological hazards and disasters in sub-Saharan Africa.

An International workshop of experts, mostly from Africa, on Health and Well-being in Africa is scheduled for May 2008. Like all other ICSU ROA projects, experts will identify areas within its (ICSU ROA) science plan on Health and Human Well-being that have to be the first to be implemented. The workshop themes are: **Human Health** – public health, HIV/AIDS, epidemiology and pathogenesis of common diseases including emerging and re-emerging diseases in Africa; and traditional/complementary and alternative medicine in Africa; and **Well-being** – African biodiversity and sustainable livelihood, food and nutrition security, wildlife and stock diseases, and water and sanitation. At the end of this workshop Task Teams will be constituted to prepare project proposals for ICSU ROA.

The African Diaspora: ICSU ROA and the NRF (South Africa) have initiated the African Diaspora Project with the intention of identifying the best ways of deploying the African experts in the Diaspora in the implementation of its 4 science plans (and concomitant projects). It also envisaged that the African Diaspora will be engaged in other STI activities taking place on the continent. A researcher who won this contracted research should submit his report in June 2008.

(II a) ICSU family and its partners in Africa -International Research Collaboration:

Within only a short period of its existence, ICSU ROA has managed to promote and facilitate the activities of the ICSU family and its partners in Africa. ICSU Unions have increased their contacts and activities in Africa through ICSU ROA. Detailed information on this subject may be found in ICSU ROA's Annual Reports (2005/06 and 2006/07), Business Plans (2005/06, 2006/07, 2007/08 and 2008/09) and its website (www.icsu-africa.org).

(II b) Science for policy

ICSU ROA is very successfully implementing this component of the ICSU's Strategic Plan in Africa. It has managed to establish excellent working partnership with many science and policy bodies on the continent, notably, the African governments, the African Union/NEPAD (AU), Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank (AfDB) and African Regional Economic Development bodies. ICSU ROA is always being invited to play leading roles in the promotion of science, technology and innovation (STI) on the continent. Additional details on this subject may be found in ICSU ROA's Annual Reports, Business Plans and on its website.

ICSU ROA is also promoting the scientific collaboration between Africa and the rest of the world. It is working very closely and successfully with UNESCO and other UN-agencies, TWAS and national policy and cooperation agencies in the developed and developing countries.

(II c) The universality of science:

ICSU ROA is today regarded as one of the best link between Africa and the rest of the world. Many organizations from around the world are sending their training, research and job opportunities to ICSU ROA for dissemination throughout Africa. Information emanating from Africa is also reaching the other parts of the world through ICSU ROA.

ICSU ROA is collaborating very well with CODATA and some ICSU Unions in promoting and facilitating the dissemination of data and information in and from Africa. ICSU ROA is facilitating the current initiative of the establishment of super-computers in Africa.

ICSU ROA is linking up (networking) African institutions within the continent and between Africa and the rest of the world. Institutions and NGOs providing research equipment and literature are using ICSU ROA as a pathway in rendering their services and materials to Africa.

ICSU ROA is currently coordinating the activities of some of the UN-proclaimed years, e.g., the International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE) and the International Polar Year (IPY). It has recently begun promoting the Astronomical Year. African participation in these and similar global scientific endeavours has tremendously increased since the establishment of this Regional Office for Africa.

(II d) Strengthening of the ICSU Structures:

By June 2005, ICSU membership in sub-Saharan Africa was very poor. As at January 2008, sub-Saharan Africa has drastically increased its ICSU membership to 20 full members and 4 associate members. Some of the associate members have submitted their applications for full membership that will be considered by the ICSU Executive Board in May 2008. 17 African countries have been approached and persuaded by ICSU ROA to apply for ICSU membership. ICSU ROA is working hard to reach a membership target of 40 countries in sub-Saharan Africa by January 2009.

ICSU ROA played an important role (meeting in China in October 2005) in facilitating the Royal Society (UK) to offer to pay annual membership fees for the African countries that failed to meet this obligation. It is also involved in the new project of the Royal Society which aims at increasing the participation of the African scientists (and their registered bodies) in activities of some selected ICSU Unions.

ICSU ROA Governance

The governance pillars of ICSU ROA, according to the NRF/ICSU Memorandum of Agreement of 11 October 2004 are: the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa, the ICSU Regional Committee for Africa (ICSU RCA) and the ICSU Secretariat in Paris. ICSU RCA has already discovered some administrative problems and challenges embodied in this MoA and did set up a sub-Committee to look into this matter and give recommendations that will be considered during the mid-term evaluation of the ICSU ROA secretariat.

Part III: 29th ICSU General Assembly, October 2008 in Mozambique

ICSU ROA is working closely and smoothly with AICIMO (Mozambique) in the preparation of this GA. Pre-GA, one-day symposium on "Science in Africa" and post-GA events are well-planned and have already attracted over-subscribed participation from in- and out-side the African continent.

ICSU ROA is championing the preparation of a book titled, "STI Success Stories from Africa." The book will be a special GA publication which intends to exemplify the importance of STI in Africa and at the same time be used for the promotion of science education and research on the continent.

ICSU ROA, NRF (South Africa) and AICIMO (Mozambique) are collaborating well in fundraising campaign, especially for supporting the participation of African experts and youths to the above mentioned GA events.

Part IV: Mentoring of young scientists

ICSU ROA facilitated the establishment of the African chapter of the World Academy of Young scientists (WAYS) whose secretariat will soon be hosted in Pretoria. Numerous activities of the future generation of African scientists, engineers and technologists are supported (in kind) by ICSU ROA.

Part V: Funds to run the ICSU ROA activities

ICSU ROA has begun lobbying other African countries (besides South Africa) to provide financial and material support for the maintenance of the ICSU ROA secretariat and its activities (i.e., implementation of the 4 science plans of ICSU ROA). A similar strategic approach is being used to win financial support from development partners of Africa.

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Saturday, 22 March 2008