

Technology development funds crucial for Africa's R&D

Instead of relying on donors, African leaders should establish their own development funds to support research and development.

By [David Muwanga](#) 14 Mar 2008

African leaders should establish technology development funds aimed at supporting research and development institutions. Prof. Edward Ayensu, the chairman of the Ghana Council of Scientific and Industrial Research said the funds would be used to execute research and development (R&D) projects in each of the countries that would put the fund in place. "We can design all types of research projects but if there are no funds to execute them, they end up on paper and in the shelves and will never be implemented," he said at the recently concluded Science with Africa conference.

"Ministers who have attended this conference should go back and talk to their presidents and tell them that there can be no development without the application of science and technology innovations," he stressed.

Among the ministers attending the session were Guinea's Minister of National Education and Scientific Research Ousmane Souare, Tanzania's Minister of Communications, Science and Technology Dr. Shukur Kawambwa and Algerian Minister for Education and Scientific Research Souad Bendjaballah. The Speaker of Rwandan Parliament Alfred Mukezamfura also attended.

"But we also have big numbers of scientists in the Diaspora who could transform Africa. We need to get these people and entice them with good salaries so that they come back to Africa and contribute to development of the continent," Prof Ayensu said.

He said that although governments have funded some existing research institutions over the years, the funds have kept on dwindling. "Even with the funds given by the donors, our ministers do not take science and technology as a priority. Time has come for the establishment of our own funding mechanism since these funds are available, only that we don't put them to proper use."

Prof Ayensu said that in order to avoid the financial crises, governments could also establish national science foundations that would support research work. "Creation of such a foundation fund by government would show political commitment to science and technology innovations as a major instrument in our development process," he said, adding: "Through solicitation of funds the international organisations and companies would be encouraged to contribute to the foundations and they would form a viable and sustainable source of funding and proceeds from the funds would be used for continuity of the research and development programmes."

Earlier, Prof. Lydia Brito of the University of Eduardo Mondlane said the science and technology applied must be people-centred and based on the needs of that particular country. "Science and Technology can work for development if it involves knowledge and know how, capacity to understand issues and that it can also be used to find alternative solutions for existing and new problems. We need social energy to solve local and global problems, we need to improve conditions of life and actions towards socio-cultural and economic growth.

"We also need cross-cutting science and technology policies that create a structures for other policies," s

said.

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