

LAUNCHING THE AFRICA ACADEMY FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH – NAIROBI KENYA ON 29 AUGUST 2007 – A MILESTONE FOR AFRICA.

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INTRODUCTION

An historic event for environmental health training in Africa took place when the Academy was officially launched at the 1st All Africa Congress on Environmental Health held in Nairobi Kenya that took place from 27 – 30 August 2007. The launch took place after more than 10 years of preparatory work that included a consultation process amongst Africa members of the International Federation for Environmental Health (IFEH) that led to the approval of the constitution of the academy as well as approval by the IFEH.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ACADEMY

The Academy is a body of academic institutions, organisations representing environmental health professionals and expert practitioners for the advancement of the science and practice of environmental health in Africa to represent academic institutions and the Africa Group of IFEH and to promote the interest and uphold the status of environmental health training in Africa. The main objectives of the Academy are:

- To advance the discipline of environmental health training in Africa.
- To represent key stakeholders in environmental health training in Africa.
- To strive to improve the standard of environmental health training in Africa
- To promote the national continental and international recognition of environmental health.

- To be a point of reference to professional advice on environmental health training.
- To facilitate contact with other international environmental health training institutions and bodies/associations that share values compatible with the aims of the Academy.
- To promote exchange of environmental health academics and professionals within Africa and abroad.
- To promote sharing of best practices in environmental health within Africa and abroad.
- To promote and facilitate collaborative environmental health research and training.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership shall be confined to any recognized institution responsible for environmental health training in Africa and recognised national environmental health professional bodies/associations in Africa. Membership shall be approved by the Africa Group of IFEH. Individual academics and expert professionals may become associate members by invitation and approval of the Africa Group of IFEH. The most important challenge is to make contact with all environmental health training institutions in Africa recognised by their respective government (Ministry of Health). Any assistance to ensure that the Academy is inclusive as possible will be highly appreciated by the Executive Committee (EXCO) of the Board of the Academy. Please forward contact details of such training Institutions, to the Chairperson.

SITE LOCATION AND MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMY

At the launch it was decided to locate the site of operations for the Academy as the Tshwane University of technology, located in Tshwane (Pretoria) South Africa. For the immediate future the EXCO see this as only a virtual site to co-ordinate the functions and activities of the Academy. The meeting in Nairobi also elected the following persons to form the first EXCO of the Academy:

- Chairperson – Dr Koos Engelbrecht (Tshwane University of Technology South Africa) that will be responsible for the communication portfolio
- Dr Tony Grimason - (University of Strathclyde, Scotland) responsible for the portfolio of European link
- Mr Kingsley Lungu - (Malawi University, Malawi) responsible for the portfolio resource mobilisation (including funding)
- Mr Joseph Okwesio - (Kenyatta University, Kenya) responsible for the portfolio academic
- Mr Dennis Mazali - (University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania) responsible for the portfolio e-learning
- Mr William Kitagwa – (Moi University, Kenya) responsible for the portfolio quality assurance of academic programmes



The first elected EXCO. From left to right: Mr Joseph Okwesio, Dr Koos Engelbrecht, Mr Kingsley Lungu, Dr Tony Grimason and Mr William Kitagwa. Insert: Mr Dennis Mazali

The EXCO was also mandated by the members to, as the membership grows, to co-opt other members with specific academic skills on the EXCO.

THE WAY FORWARD

At the first meeting of the EXCO of the Academy in Nairobi the committee decided on the following as a way forward:

Web site

The webmaster of the IFEH offered to locate the activities of the Africa Academy on the website of the IFEH. The Chairperson will take responsibility to together with the web master of the IFEH establish a web page for the Academy. As the activity expands the web site will be populated with the information and details.

Priority tasks

As a matter of high priority the respective portfolio holders will establish an action list of priorities within their portfolios. The actions will be approved by the EXCO of the Academy and target dates and progress will be periodically monitored. The following tasks were listed at the first meeting as tasks to be considered by the portfolio owners:

- Membership database
- Revisit the constitution (as soon as the web page is up and running a copy will be posted for information and comments)
- Establishment of a web page
- Academic links outside Africa
- Quality assurance guidelines for academic programmes
- To be a point of entry in Africa for academic information
- Establish an accredited Africa Journal for Environmental Health
- To develop generic training outcomes (syllabus) as minimum requirements for recognition
- To promote exchange of academic staff and students
- To enhance, promote and stimulate environmental health research in Africa

- To promote research skills amongst environmental health academics and practitioners
- To establish a database of environmental health expertise in Africa
- To promote and stimulate e-learning

CONTACT DETAILS

Until such time as the web page is fully operational, the EXCO members can be contacted at the following e-mail addresses:

- Chairperson – Dr Koos Engelbrecht (Tshwane University of Technology South Africa) communication portfolio
E-mail: engelbrechtjc@tut.ac.za
- Dr Tony Grimason - (University of Strathclyde, Scotland) European link
E-mail: A.M.Grimason@strath.ac.uk
- Mr Kingsley Lungu - (Malawi University, Malawi) resource mobilisation (including funding). E-mail: klungu@poly.ac.mw
Kingsley.lungu@strath.ac.uk or Lunguking1961@yahoo.com
- Mr Joseph Okweso - (Kenyatta University, Kenya) portfolio academic
E-mail: joarung@yahoo.com
- Mr Dennis Mazali - (University of Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania) e-learning
E-mail: dmazali@gmail.com
- Mr William Kitagwa – (Moi University, Kenya) quality assurance of academic programmes
E-mail: Wilkita2002@yahoo.com

CONCLUSION

The EXCO of the Academy would like to urge all environmental health academics, especially training institutions responsible for environmental health training in Africa to pledge and commit their active support to the aims, objectives and plans of the Academy. At the first meeting of EXCO the members confirmed their commitment to work tirelessly to succeed with the aims and objectives of the Academy.