The 9th Annual Africa Young Graduates and Scholars Conference (AYGS) 2015: **ABSTRACT DEADLINE EXTENDED TO 24 OCTOBER 2014**

**BACKGROUND**

The 2015 AYGS will provide yet another platform for participants to engage in critical dialogue about the current African realities and a possible, plausible and desirable future for Africa. The 2014 Conference, dubbed “Africa at a Crossroads: Future prospects for Africa after 50 years of the Organization of African Unity/African Union”, considered Africa’s future and developmental breakthroughs, as well as its challenges and opportunities going forward. At the core of the 2015 AYGS will be a critical interrogation of the drivers of change in Africa moving forward, more especially as the AU is currently producing new ideas and mapping out new vision for the next 50 years. AYGS participants will look at drivers of change in Africa- while locating them in a historical context. The theme for the upcoming conference is thus **Agenda 2063: an opportune moment for Africa.**

Agenda 2063\(^1\) can be described as an endogenous, shared strategic framework for inclusive growth and sustainable development, for Africa’s transformation over the next 50 years. It seeks to harness the continent’s comparative advantages such as its people, history and cultures; natural resources; position and repositioning in the world. The framework aims at engendering amongst others: equitable and people-centred growth and development; the eradication of poverty; development of human capital; building of social assets, infrastructure and public goods; empowerment of women and youth; promotion of lasting peace and security; to strengthen and develop effective, strong democratic developmental states; and participatory and accountable governance institutions to fulfil the African Dream. A 50-year time span is, undoubtedly, a long planning horizon. The choice of a 50-year timeframe however, must be understood for its significance (symbolic and substantive). It is within the context of the 50\(^{th}\) Anniversary of the establishment of the OAU in 1963 and the need for the continent to take stock of its

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past challenges and achievements, and to set its long-term vision and goals to be realized when the AU will be marking the centenary celebrations of the OAU, in 2063.

The agenda comes at a time of great opportunities for Africa, with positive movements on the political, social and economic fronts. At the same time, Africa continues to face challenges to overcome, such as the legacy of colonialism, exploitation, underdevelopment and marginalization. Africa’s transformation must be understood in the context of an unfolding global situation and trends, including the ongoing realignments of the global economic, geopolitical, security and social landscapes; changes and advances in technology, production, trade, knowledge and labour markets; the opportunities presented by global demographic trends and the growing global middle classes in emerging and developing countries and regions.

While Africa has made commendable progress in addressing its challenges during the last two decades – and this is a source of hope – the continent, however, still needs successfully complete a radical transition from policy commitments to actual implementation of policies and programmes, while taking cognizance of the other daunting challenges that remain and which could impact the next transition.

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The 9th Annual Young Graduates and Scholars (AYGS) Conference (formerly called Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA) AYGS) will be held at the University of Cape Town (South Africa) from 30 March to 01 April 2015. The 2015 conference will be held under the theme: Agenda 2063 an opportune moment for Africa.

The Africa Young Graduates and Scholars Programme (AYGS) is a research capacity building programme. The programme was conceived in 2005, with the aim of building a body of knowledge and to project the African voice in various discourses about the continent and Diaspora. It is further intended to bridge the existing gap of expertise in knowledge production on African affairs by developing a crop of knowledge producers among the youth of the continent. The objective of the conference each year is to provide a platform for young and emerging scholars on the African continent through new insights in
the debates pertaining to the challenges facing African societies and the way forward for the upliftment of African value systems and the ultimate integration of the African continent.

The conference aims to bring together African graduates and young scholars from various disciplinary backgrounds to reflect on Africa’s future and developmental breakthroughs, as well as its challenges and opportunities going forward.

The conference seeks, inter alia, to promote knowledge production amongst young scholars; provide a platform for emerging African scholars to engage and exchange insights in the debates pertaining to the challenges faced by African societies as well as to help bridge the gap of expertise in knowledge production about African affairs by developing a society of knowledge producers among African youth.

This conference will thus focus on the multiple dimensions of Global Change and on seeking innovative ways through which Africa can confront its challenges by taking advantage of the milestones that the continent has achieved to date.

The conference will be organised in the following format

a) Paper presentations
b) A debate session

Papers are invited to focus on any of the following sub themes:

A: Science and Technology

Science, technology and innovation (STI) across Africa form a key part of improving human capital development. Science, technology and innovation (STI) offer a multitude of benefits for the continent, from improving education and knowledge sharing, to increasing exposure for African innovation to improve the living conditions of the continent's population residents. New waves of democracy have been ushered in through the use of Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) and social media, good governance through the electoral systems lens. Nonetheless the big question is whether Africa recognises the significance of STI as a crucial aspect for its development trajectory? Some important
questions to ask are “Is Africa producing science which addresses challenges that are unique to the many countries in the continent?” Or does Africa continue to be the subject of a science externally derived and dictated, in other words, Is Africa inventing or consuming science? In recognising the role of science in Africa, how many African countries have Science and Technology policies, and what is the state of science, technology and innovation in Africa in view of its recognised significance related to Africa’s development and growth? This sub theme calls for innovative papers that touch on Science and Technology demonstrating the power of innovation and applied science in knowledge generation, dissemination and utilization. More importantly, recognising the role of science, technology and innovation as a catalyst for Africa’s development and growth. Papers invited for this sub theme should focus broadly on the following topics: the Green or Bio-Economy, Climate change, Environmental sustainability, Agriculture and food security, ICTs, STI for Africa’s development, Towards Africa’s 2063, Science diplomacy for African integration, Space sciences and Social innovation for economic impact. In view of the critical reflections made above, it is important to note the following:

- There is a need to look at whether the African continent has enough capacity (in the form of trained and competent experts and technical practitioners in the field of science engineering and technology) to meet the demands of emerging and fast growing economies (e.g. Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, Angola and Kenya) on the continent. In many ways the key question to ask in this instance is whether African states recognise the great potential that STI has in driving economic growth and development, by maximising the continent’s competitive advantages. For this to happen, an African intellectual capital is necessary to contribute to this key driver for Africa’s development, moving towards Africa’s next 50 years, as expressed through Agenda 2063.

- This is a conference for young African graduates – the big talk “dialogue” in many circles is determining the role of youth in STI led development. There is value in giving the young African graduates an opportunity to interrogate the role of youth as the primary driving force of innovation and development within the African continent, using present and future perspectives. This is of particular importance as Africa needs to find ways to build on its potential, the youth, as Africa has one of the largest young population in the world.
• Many conferences held on Africa and its development tend to assume the position of the continent as a country or homogeneous region. Although this may be appropriate from a pan-African approach, this discourse tends to miss the fact that there are many African countries with unique characteristics in this vast continent. This is particularly the case when it comes to discussing the state of STI in Africa. Although a more pan-African approach can be articulated in relation to democracy, peace and security and other more political matters, this is not necessarily the situation with science, technology and innovation. STI is arguably still seen in isolation from other components of the development arena, and it is suggested that this conference can debate this dichotomy and help resolve some of these perceptions.

B: Development for the people

The focus of Africa’s development must be on the population. Africa still has one of the fastest growing populations among the major regions in the world, a trend that has been projected to continue well beyond 2063. By 2010 the population of Africa was about 1 billion and will increase (according the ‘Medium Variant’ of the UN projections in 2012) to 2.8 billion by 2063, a three-fold increase in human numbers in 50 years. Population and environmental issues must be integrated into national/regional development policies (such as Agenda 2063 for Africa) and programmes for implementation in order to achieve sustainable development.

Critical to Africa’s future is the realization of the ‘Demographic Dividend’, a point underscored in the draft Agenda 2063 for Africa. The population of Africa is predominantly youthful with children and young people below the age of 30 years constituting about 70 percent of the total population. Various treaties and international conventions to which the AU has committed (including ICPD PoA, the African Youth Charter, Convention on the Rights of the Child, etc.) provide a guide and obliges AU Member States to mobilize resources and facilitate the implementation of programmes on youth employment, youth rights, gender balance, advocacy, education and skills training, health, peace and security, culture, sporting and recreation through youth meaningful participation. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (Art. 24) affirms that children have the right to attain the highest standards of health and to health care, including family planning education and services.
C: Earth System Science

I. Future Earth

Future Earth is a 10-year international research programme that will provide critical knowledge required for societies to face the challenges posed by global environmental change and to identify opportunities for a transition to global sustainability. It is being developed by a partnership for global sustainability including researchers, funders and users of knowledge. Future Earth will answer fundamental questions about how and why the global environment is changing, what are likely future changes, what the implications are for human development and the diversity of life on earth, and what the opportunities are to reduce risks and vulnerabilities, enhance resilience, and implement transformations to prosperous and equitable futures. The main organisational units for Future Earth research will be a set of three broad and integrated research themes:

a) Dynamic Planet – understanding how planet Earth is changing due to natural phenomena and human activities, with a particular focus on interactions between social and environmental changes across scales;

b) Global Development – providing the knowledge for addressing the most pressing needs of humanity: sustainable, secure and fair stewardship of food, water, biodiversity, energy, materials and other ecosystem functions and services;

c) Transformations towards Sustainability – understanding transformation processes and options, assessing how these relate to human values and behaviour, emerging technologies, and economic development pathways, and evaluating strategies for managing the global environment across sectors and scales.
A global secretariat for Future Earth has recently been established, with work at developing stage for an African node, envisaged to involve a number of role players on the continent.

II. Gender and Global Change

With the aim of identifying innovative approaches to mainstreaming gender and socio-cultural inclusion within global change research, this sub theme aims to bring together young scholars from different disciplines, primarily those who have expertise in gender theories and methodologies, socio-cultural epistemologies, and those with technical and scientific academic expertise in global change.

The motivation of this arises from the need to address gaps in research and knowledge development in the South African Global Change arena with regard to gender and socio-cultural paradigms. It also arises from the need to increase the engagement and capacity of women and women researchers to the development of knowledge in this field nationally, and to enhance inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary knowledge production. Gender and socio-cultural paradigms are both highly relevant and impactful knowledge fields that have been under-served within the African Global change research agenda.

This topic is included in the conference programme to advance the frontiers of existing knowledge in these themes, and to facilitate and advocate for the growth of the research capacity required to enhance the delivery of this strategic national research and development goal.

D: Peace & Security including Democracy & Governance

Africa continues to host some of the world's most complex humanitarian emergencies. Unconstitutional changes of governments still take place. Entrenching democratic principles of good governance such as accountability and transparency remains a challenge. According to a recent report by the Institute of Security Studies entitled “the future of armed conflicts in Africa:
more violence or greater peace”, civil or small scale internecine armed intra-state conflicts have not stopped and remain the dominant form of conflict in Africa. According to the report, even though the number of wars has halved since the 1990s- the nature of conflicts has changed significantly, with lines between criminal and political violence increasingly blurred.

This state of affairs seems to continue even though the AU has embraced new concepts and principles (such as non-indifference, responsibility to protect, infrastructure for peace.) and even though some aspects of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) have been developed since 2002, including a Peace and Security Council, an African Standby Force, a Continental Early Warning System and a Panel of the Wise. This sounds impressive, but the operationalization record is patchy. Therefore, this conference theme which deals with peace and security is especially interested in presentations that explore the added value of APSA institutions to the conflict prevention discourse in the continent. It seeks to look at, what has been successful and what remains a challenge pursuant to the aspirations of a peaceful and prosperous Africa? The aim is to examine how the AU has handled Africa’s peace and security challenges since 2002 and how it should do so in 50 years' time and beyond.

THE AU DEBATE SESSION

GENESIS OF THE NEW BRICS BANK: WHATS IN IT FOR AFRICA
Preference shall be given to papers with grounded field based analysis, innovative methodological, and approaches. As for the AU Debate Session, see Annex for more details.
Instructions on Submission of Abstracts and Full Papers

Submit via email to Dr Olga Bialostocka or Keneilwe Hlahane (contact details are provided in the table below). Indicate your sub-theme and topic in the subject line of your email. Abstracts for papers should be between 250 and 300 words. The debate abstract should be 500 words.

When submitting your abstract, include:

- full contact details (email, Tel/fax)
- country of nationality
- country of domicile
- institutional affiliation

Outstanding papers presented at the conference will be selected and considered for publication.

For more information about the conference please do not hesitate to contact:
Ithuteng Nkhereanye on 0027123169763 or 027724607524, or by e-mail at inkhereanye@hsrc.ac.za

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