NEWS ITEM 5 FOR FANRPAN WEBSITE

"AFRICAN SCIENTISTS TO STRENGTHEN BIOTECH NETWORK"

Delegates at the First All-Africa Congress on Biotechnology, held in Nairobi, Kenya, on 22-26 September 2008, drafted the Nairobi Declaration that spells out key declarations and recommendations to strengthen efforts to move modern biotechnology forward in Africa.

The Congress organized by the African Biotechnology Stakeholders Forum and supported by the Agricultural Biotechnology Network in Africa, the African Union, and the Kenyan Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, was attended by over 400 delegates from 39 countries, 17 of which were countries outside Africa. The range of papers presented covered a wide range of biotechnology research and applications.

The Nairobi Declaration included the following declarations:

- Expressed great appreciation for the initiative of ABSF and partners in convening this congress.
- Supported the need for Africa to move at the same pace as other regions in adopting biotech applications.
- Fully supported the Tripoli Declaration on biotech and a partnership between Libya and other regional stakeholders.
- Appreciated the role played by international, regional, and local donors who contributed resources and sponsorship to the congress.
- Welcomed initiatives by international partners, development partners and research centres in supporting projects and programmes.
- Welcomed initiatives on regional biotech programmes through lead institutions and National Agricultural Research Centres.
- Resolved working towards advancement and development of biotechnologies that were safer with less potential risk to the environment or health.

The congress also drafted the following recommendations:

- Formulation of regional biotechnology programmes under a new umbrella to be known as "African Biotech Outreach Programme".
- Establishment of an "African Biotechnology Trust Fund" under the African Union.
- Strengthening the Agricultural Biotechnology Network in Africa to serve as a portal link for biotech communication.
- Establishment of a Regional Secretariat in Nairobi to oversee implementation of congress resolutions and to monitor post-congress programmes.
- Preparations of peer reviewed congress proceedings for distribution on the continent.
- Mandating ABSF and the AU to initiate preparations for 2nd All-Africa Biotechnology Congress.
- Mandating ABSF, AU and ABNETA to convene an e-forum to discuss post-congress issues not exhausted at congress.

NOTE: ***The full text can be obtained from the ABSF website at www.absfafrica.org or from FelixMboyi at fmmboyi@absfafrica.org***

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