

The 1st Ever All Africa Congress on Biotechnology

The Nairobi Declaration And Way Forward

Grand Regency Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya
22 - 26 September 2008

Congress Theme:

Harnessing the Potential of Biotechnology for Food Security and Socio-economic Development in Africa.



PREAMBLE

The 1st All Africa Congress on Biotechnology commenced on 22nd September, 2008 with welcome addresses by Prof. Norah Olemba (Chairperson of the Congress Organizing Committee and Executive Director of the African Biotechnology Stakeholders Forum (ABSF) who hosted the event and rallied partners), Dr Mpoko Bokanga, the Executive Director of African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF); Professor Shaukat Abdulrazak, Secretary, National Council for Science and Technology (NCST), Kenya; the representative of Ms Rhoda Tumusime, the African Union (AU) Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture and Dr Wilson Songa, the Agriculture Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Kenya. The Honourable Assistant Minister for Agriculture in Kenya, officially opened the Congress with the vote of thanks by the Rapporteur-General, Prof. Diran Makinde.

Plenary sessions were addressed by eminent speakers on the status of biotechnology in Africa and the world. The tone for the presentation in the area was set by Dr. Clive James, ISAAA Global Director, who spoke on the Global Status of Biotech Crops. Subsequent plenary sessions in the 5-day congress dealt with the Advancement in Biotechnology specifically in the areas of molecular biology, bioinformatics, genomics and biotechnology tools; Policy and Biosafety, Communication, Awareness and Networking; the Potential Impact of Agricultural Biotechnology for Food Security and Socio-economic Development in Africa, Farmer Participation and Public-Private Sector Partnership.

Breakout sessions were held in which details of the topics covered by the plenary sessions were presented.

A total of 39 countries, of which 17 were from outside Africa including USA, Canada, Brazil, Germany, Britain, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, France, China, Australia, Pakistan, India, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland and Belgium and 416 delegates attended the Biotech Congress with representation from Dozens of international organizations and institutions, leading amongst them were: United States Agency for International

Development (USAID), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Center for Science in the Public Interest-USA, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) Washington, Iowa State University-USA, Michigan State University-USA, Croplife International, International Livestock Research Institute, World AgroForestry Centre (ICRAF), International Centre for Research in Arid and Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT), International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (ICIPE), Open University - UK, Swaminathan Research Foundation-India, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), ISAAA Global and ISAAA AfriCentre, Africa Harvest Biotech Foundation International (A-Harvest), International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre (CIMMYT), International Potato Centre (CIP), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), Africa Union (AU) and the Nuffield Council on Bioethics, UK.

Because of its sheer magnitude, the 1st All Africa Congress on Biotechnology was roundly sponsored by a host of leading donor organisations through resource support and sponsorship deals for international delegates. Amongst many of the sponsors included: Applied Biosystems Ltd, USDA, AATF, ILRI, African Union, A-Harvest, Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), CIMMYT, ICRISAT, UNESCO, IFPRI, ISAAA Global, Kenya Plant health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), Ministry of Science and Technology in Kenya, FARA, Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in East and Central Africa (ASARECA), Biosafety Train and Croplife International.

The Nairobi Declaration

The delegates in the just concluded 1st All Africa Congress in Biotechnology that was held between 22 – 26 September 2008 at the Grand Regency Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya made the following declarations:

1. Greatly appreciated the initiative by African Biotechnology Stakeholders Forum (ABSF) and the Agricultural Biotechnology Network in Africa (ABNETA), together with the African Union (AU) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (MOST) of Kenya and other partners in planning, implementing and convening the biotech congress which was the first ever congress to be organised on the continent.
2. Supported the urgent need for Africa to move at the same pace with other regions of the world in adopting biotechnology applications for food security and the socioeconomic development of the continent's ever growing population.
3. Recalled and fully supported the Tripoli declaration resulting from the African Conference in Biotechnology that was held in Libya in June 2008. Similarly, a closer working relationship involving collaboration and partnership in biotechnology programmes and projects between Libya and other regional stakeholders was supported. It was resolved that the Tripoli and Nairobi Declaration should be harmonized for mutual working relationship and benefit of the continent in biotechnology advancement and development.
4. Appreciated the role played by international, regional and local donors who contributed resources and sponsored delegates to the biotech congress. These donors included Applied Biosystems, USDA, AATF, ILRI, African Union, A-Harvest, Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), CIMMYT, ICRISAT, UNESCO, IFPRI, ISAAA Global, Ministry of Science and Technology in Kenya,

FARA, ASARECA, Biosafety Train, Kenya Plant health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), Kenya Bureau of Standards (KEBS), Croplife International and others.

5. Welcomed the current initiatives by international partners including development partners and research centres in supporting projects and Programmes towards development of biotechnology on the continent. Leading amongst them was Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Croplife International, United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the work of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural research (CGIAR Centres).

6. Welcomed the current initiatives of regional biotechnology programmes through lead institutions including FARA, ASARECA, AATF, IFPRI, CIMMYT, ISAAA Afri-centre and the subsequent role played by the National Agricultural Research Centres in promoting biotechnology advancement on the continent including the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute, Biotechnology Research Centre of Libya and others. The congress further supported the strengthening of inter-institutional collaborations in Africa in the area of biotechnology for the general good and benefit of the continent's population.

7. Resolved working towards advancement and development of biotechnologies that were significantly safer with less potential risks to the continent's population either environmentally or health wise and that the urge for biotechnology applications would be driven by Africa's own determined demand and needs. The best example stated was the need for Africa to urgently adopt agricultural biotechnology to mitigate the impact of food insecurity on the continent and make agriculture a beneficial household enterprise for millions of families that rely on farming for their livelihoods.

Biotech Congress Recommendations and Way Forward

1. Formulation of Regional Biotechnology Programmes and Projects (RBPP) under a new harmonized umbrella to be known as the “*African Biotech Outreach Programme (ABOP)*” to be implemented within a time frame of three years and to be coordinated by the ABSF Secretariat and the African Union through the Agricultural Biotechnology Network in Africa (ABNETA) and selected regional coordinating organisations in East, West, central, Southern and North Africa.
2. Establishment of an *African Biotechnology Trust Fund (ABTF)* to be managed by the African Union and coordinated by the Agricultural Biotechnology Network in Africa (ABNETA). The fund would be utilized in the implementation of the regional programmes and projects in biotechnology under ABOP for the common good of the African continent and resources would be sort from key allies in biotechnology, international trust funds, global donors and development partners in agricultural biotechnology development and from international development financial institutions including the World Bank and the African Development Bank.
3. Strengthening of the Agricultural Biotechnology Network in Africa (ABNETA) to act as a portal link for biotechnology communication, e-forum platform, resource centre for access to biotechnology documents including reports, updates, publications, statistical database, scientific exchange hub, interactive biotechnology warehouse for scientists and convergence point for collated data and information on African biotechnology development.
4. Establishment of a Regional Secretariat in Nairobi, Kenya to oversee implementation of congress resolutions and to monitor and evaluate the post congress programmes and projects in biotechnology. Subject to resource mobilisation from development partners, the secretariat would have representation from regional coordinates i.e. central. East, west, north and southern Africa. The

office would act as a one stop shop for all matters related to African biotechnology development and partnership programmes.

5. Preparation of peer reviewed congress proceedings in the form of DVD, VCD and CD packages for distribution to all African institutions, organisations and centres of excellence in biotechnology advancement on the continent. A follow up publication in biotechnology would be considered and leading scientists, institutions and organisations would be invited to write chapters for the proposed up coming text in biotechnology for use in centres of learning and research on the continent. Michigan State University and Iowa State University would be incorporated in the project to promote competitive development and production of the biotech text.
6. The African Biotechnology Stakeholders Forum, The African Union and the Agricultural Biotechnology Network in Africa were mandated to initiate arrangements and preparatory work for the *2nd All Africa Congress in Biotechnology* that would be planned to be held within the next 2 – 3 years in order to review progress, learn from lessons learnt and prepare for future challenges in African biotechnology development. Such a congress would be held in another selected African region as per on-going consultations with stakeholders in African biotechnology development.
7. The African Biotechnology Stakeholders Forum, The African Union and the Agricultural Biotechnology Network in Africa were mandated to convene a post congress e-forum to discuss various arising issues and matters that were not exhausted during the congress deliberations including but not limited to: reactions from congress delegates; suggestions on future activities; proposals on additional way forward; challenges and make proposals, and a general post mortem of the biotech congress. A suitable moderator would be sort and an interactive session would be communicated and commenced on ABNETA (www.abneta.org) to open the e-forum. A report would be generated and developed as an addendum to the congress proceedings and publication.