



## 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ABNE TAC in Seattle

The 10th Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting of AUDA-NEPAD ABNE was held from December 11-12, 2018 at the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF), in Seattle, USA, BMGF being a key sponsor of the ABNE programme.



*Group picture of ABNE TAC members*

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The meeting was opened by remarks from the Chair of the TAC, BMGF, MSU and AU-NEPAD. Following this, ABNE presented its Director's Report and Annual Technical Progress Report. The presentations were rated professional and very satisfactory. The work plan presented later on was also received well, attracting only minor comments.

During this meeting, the results of an external evaluation of the ABNE programme carried out by J.E. Austin Evaluation Team was also presented and was very much appreciated by TAC members.

In overall, ABNE TAC came up with a very positive recommendation on ABNE's performance lauding the Director of ABNE for his leadership and the entire ABNE community for the impressive achievements scored.

## Successful AUDA-NEPAD ABNE Retreat on Strategic Plan and Programme Documents

African Union Development Agency-NEPAD ABNE (AUDA-NEPAD ABNE) held a retreat from February 18 – 22 in Johannesburg to finalise ABNE new strategic plan and programme documents. As the current phase II of ABNE is about to end on December 2019, ABNE Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) recommended that a strategic plan be developed to define the vision, mission and strategic objectives for the next five years.



*A view of participants during the meeting*

In his opening remarks, Prof. Aggrey Ambali, Head of AUDA-NEPAD Industrialisation, Science, Technology and Innovation, congratulated all participants for the results achieved in the past year. He mentioned the TAC meeting held in Seattle in December where TAC member commended the team for the good work. He encouraged all to keep this positive momentum. He also highlighted the fact that NEPAD has become AUDA-NEPAD with more competence and authority to coordinate and execute AU programmes.

Dr Jeremy Ouedraogo, ABNE Director, welcomed staff to the retreat and wishes them the best for the New Year 2019. He pointed out there is a lot to deliver this year and that the team needs to work closely together. He added that the team also needs to be actively part of the new story of the Agency, especially with the establishment of AUDA-NEPAD.

Now that NEPAD has become the African Union Development Agency with a new mandate, it is essential that a strategic plan be developed to show how ABNE could better fit in the AUDA-NEPAD outcomes

The 5-day meeting helped to thoroughly amend the draft version of the strategic plan and include all the new dimensions of ABNE work. The broader scope of the requests from member states to ABNE on regulatory matters going beyond Agriculture and Environment to cover Health, Livestock and fisheries, Emerging technologies and Biosecurity was a new development implying to elaborate a strategic plan with Vision, Missions and strategic objectives.

The new comprehensive strategic plan will definitely need a robust funding system from members states but also from African and international donors. In that regard, the retreat was an opportunity to build a full proposal that could meet the requirements of ABNE major donors. Securing adequate funding will help ABNE effectively undergo its institutional transformation and growth to become the envisioned fully operational African Union technical body on all areas pertaining to biosafety and biosecurity.

## Capacity Building on the Development of Biosafety Guidelines in Zambia

NEPAD Agency African Biosafety Network of Expertise (ABNE) in partnership with the National Biosafety Authority (NBA) of Zambia organized a capacity building Workshop on the development of biosafety guidelines in Lusaka, Zambia, from 5 – 7 December.

The biosafety guidelines are needed to operationalize the Biosafety Act and Regulation. The workshop was attended by 24 Zambian regulatory staff including NBA Board, NBA staff, and stakeholders from other relevant institutions.



*A view of participants during the meeting.*

Three ABNE's Senior Programme Officers provided technical support to NBA in the development of four biosafety guidelines including on Risk Assessment, on Confined Field Trial, on Transport, Storage and Disposal of GMOs and on contained use (Laboratory and Greenhouse experimentation).

NEPAD Agency ABNE experts seized the opportunity of their mission in Zambia to make a courtesy call on the Minister of Higher Education in Zambia. The country is endeavoring to put in place the necessary regulatory system to safely harness the opportunities of modern biotechnologies for its development.

As stated in its mandate, NEPAD Agency ABNE is committed to bringing the needed technical expertise to Zambia and other African countries willing to explore the potentials of emerging technologies.

## Technical assistance on the Constitution of Biosafety Committee in Mozambique

NEPAD agency ABNE provided technical assistance on the constitution of the Biosafety Committee (GIIBS) from 17-18 December, 2018, in Maputo, Mozambique. The meeting was organized with GIIBs on the use of terminologies and sectional interpretation of in the biosafety Decree for its functionality and operationalization in the context of Mozambique. It was also an inauguration and induction meeting for all the newly nominated GIIBS members.



*Group picture of GIIBS members with the Minister of Science and Technology (in the middle and wearing glasses)*

In 2005, Mozambique established a national biosafety framework including an administrative mechanism with inter-institutional and multi-disciplinary group (GIIBs, acronym in Portuguese) charged with the responsibility of coordinating biosafety activities by the Decree. To fulfill the requirement of the Decree, GIIBs needed to be officially constituted with the oath of responsibility read by the permanent members nominated from the affected ministries in enhancing functional biosafety regulation system.

NEPAD Agency ABNE provided technical backstopping for the process of nomination of GIIBs

Secretary according to the legal framework. During this meeting, GIIBs members were officially constituted and inauguration with the oath of office read before the Minister and signed by each member.

The role of NEPAD Agency ABNE in building functional regulatory regime in Mozambique was loudly applauded and many reference made to ABNE efforts in building capacity of the competent authority, GIIBs secretariat and other relevant ad-hoc committees constituted before the GIIBs was officially constituted. The minister through the GIIBs secretary requested for more capacity building of the newly constituted GIIBs.

# Sensitization and Awareness Creation Workshop on Biosafety for Lawyers in Malawi

NEPAD Agency ABNE, in collaboration with the National Biosafety Regulatory Agency of Malawi, organized a sensitization and awareness creation workshop on biosafety for Lawyers in Malawi, on 6 November, 2018, in Lilongwe.

This capacity building initiative is subsequent to a visit by ABNE's technical team in the country in September, 2018, during which members of the Parliament's committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources, requested NEPAD Agency ABNE to support the country in the creation of sensitization and awareness for targeted stakeholders who matter as the country gets along the process of de-regularization of the Bt. cotton. Hence, the reason for considering the lawyers constituency as one of the key stakeholders



*Group picture of participants*

The prime objective of this activity was to sensitize the lawyers on a broad range of issues on biosafety and to raise awareness on agricultural biotechnology and its safe application as guided by international legal instruments. It was also the objective of the meeting to introduce the lawyers to the Biosafety Regulatory landscape in Africa and the Biosafety Regulatory approaches and system in Malawi and also aspects of Intellectual Property and Technology transfer in relation to Agricultural Biotechnology.

The participants were drawn from Government Ministries and National Agencies such as Attorney General's Chambers, and Department Justice,

Directorates of civil litigation and Public Prosecution, Environmental Agency, Agriculture Department, Customs, Standard Setting Agency, Human Rights Department, the first Parliamentary counsel and legislative drafting office. All the expected 20 attorneys were in attendance.

During the meeting, presentations were made on the basics of biotechnology and biosafety. The lawyers were also introduced to GMO associated litigations from some African countries and elsewhere. Intellectual Property issues regarding the technology were also introduced to the participant to enable

them to appreciate aspects of technology transfer and understand the shortfalls of most developing countries in lack of the required IP management capacity and resources to perform product clearance analyses and evaluations that facilitate the legitimate import, use and/or export of products from these technologies.

The one day sensitization and awareness workshop was a success. The voices of appreciation were loud from the participants and Government officials who graced the meeting. The call from the participants and officials

for more training opportunities in biosafety regulation for the lawyers was not misplaced either.

As the country ventures into the last lap of de-regularization of the Bt. Cotton, the lawyers' constituency in Malawi should be considered to be a very important point in facilitating that process and to even play an important role at the post de-regularization stage, to ensure that Malawi safely harness this technology opportunity for its socio-economic development.

## Meetings of the Representative of AUDA-NEPAD with Delegates at the UN Biodiversity Conference in Egypt

The 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 14) to the Convention on Biological diversity (CBD) was officially closed on 29 November, 2018 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt. Besides the plenaries and the meetings in the various working groups to try to reach consensus on biodiversity key issues, the conference was an opportunity for the representative of the African Union Development Agency, AUDA-NEPAD to meet several delegates to provide them with the necessary information and technical advices.

Throughout the meetings, the African delegates had a strong common position on the need for emerging

technologies for the development of the continent. This position was in line with the reports of the African Union (AU) High Level Panel on Emerging Technologies adopted by the African Heads of States, and officially launched in June, 2018, in Kigali, Rwanda.

The AU NEPAD team, led by Dr Jeremy Ouedraogo, Director of the NEPAD Regional Office for West Africa and Director of the African Biosafety Network of Expertise, was requested by many authorities for informal meetings. Dr Ouedraogo particularly met African authorities



*From left to right: Dr. Jeremy Ouedraogo, Director of the AUDA-NEPAD Regional Office in Dakar, Mr. Batio Bassiere, Minister of Environment of Burkina Faso and Mr. Nana, Focal Point CBD, Ministry of the Environment, Burkina Faso*

who were present in Sharm El Sheikh for the high level segment of the biodiversity conference. Among the African leaders was Mr. Batio Nestor Bassiere, Minister of **Environment**, Green Economy and Climate Change of Burkina Faso.

Dr Ouedraogo provided him will all the information pertaining to the recommendations recommendations of the AU High Panel on Emerging Technologies (APET) and offered him print versions of the relevant documents, including the Integrated Vector Management programme document.

Dr. Ouedraogo also met with ETC Group representatives. They asked for more information on the genesis of APET and in particular on the report adopted by the AU and recommending research on gene drive technology for the fight against malaria in Africa. They said they wished the AU had included the civil society in this decision making process. They asked Dr Ouedraogo to facilitate a meeting with the AU so that her organization expresses their concerns on the technology. Dr Ouedraogo explained that the panel was formed and its members nominated by the AU Commission. APET mission is to make recommendations on the appropriate technologies for the African continent.

Dr Ouedraogo also met some delegates of the African group to discuss positions and help the group reach consensus or develop alliances with other groups. Africa participation to this CBD meeting was commended by all countries and Dr Ouedraogo assured that the African Union Commission and NEPAD will continue to provide African countries with the necessary technical support to ensure the continent keep the momentum and defend its interests in this important negotiation meeting.



*From left to right are Dr. Ouedraogo and representatives from South Africa, AUC and Egypt*

The African group held its last consultation meeting on November 28. In his closing remarks, Dr Jeremy Ouedraogo affirmed “this COP has revealed the Africa we want, diverse but united.” He further stated that the AUC and NEPAD will continue to provide the necessary support for a better preparation and coordination of the African group for the next meetings.

## **Technical Working Meeting to Review a Draft Directive on the Establishment of IBCs in Ethiopia**

African Union Development Agency-NEPAD African Biosafety Network of Expertise provides technical

backstopping to Ethiopian regulators to review the draft Directive on the establishment and operationalization of Institutional Biosafety Committees (IBCs), from 25 – 29 February, 2019 in Addis Ababa.

A total of 12 people including regulators and researchers drawn from various institutions such as the Commission for Environment, forest and Climate Change, the Ethiopian Institute of Agricultural Research (EIAR) and Addis Ababa University participated in the working group meeting. The meeting was organized by the Laws and Standards Directorate of the Commission for Environment, Forest and Climate Change in collaboration with the AUDA-NEPAD ABNE.

Ethiopia has made progress in trial production of Bt cotton and the testing of WEMA maize. Increased intensity in testing and deployment of GM crops in the country requires strengthening of regulatory capacity at both institutional and national levels. The Department of Laws and Standards under the Commission for Environment, Forest and Climate Change requested the AUDA-NEPAD Agency ABNE to support the development of a Directive for the establishment and operationalization of Institutional Biosafety Committees (IBCs) in the country.

AUDA-NEPAD ABNE team provided the necessary support for the development and finalization of the Directive. The Directive was also translated into Amharic language and it is hoped that it will be operational soon.

## Upcoming events

- **12 – 14 April;** Review National process on establishing functional biosafety system in Niger, Niamey, Niger
- **15 – 18 April;** Orientation workshop for the Newly Constituted Portfolio Committee parliamentarians of eSwatini on Biosafety issue and for the media on the adoption of Bt Cotton, eZulwini, eSwatini
- **15 – 19 April;** Stakeholders' consultative meeting on the review of draft biosafety policy, laws and regulations, Kigali, Rwanda
- **22 – 27 April;** Inauguration of Technical Working Groups (TWGs), first meeting of TWGs and review of 1<sup>st</sup> set of biosafety guidelines, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire



### NEPAD Agency – African Biosafety Network of Expertise

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