

## **Orientation Training for RSIF Cohort 4 (Additional) PhD Scholars – 2022**

*Monday 19 September 2022, icipe, Nairobi*

### **Opening Remarks by Goolam Mohamedbhai, CAG Chair**

I wish to thank *icipe* for inviting me to address the RSIF PhD scholars at this opening ceremony of the orientation training for the PhD scholars. I feel honoured, especially as I have always taken a keen interest in RSIF since its creation.

I congratulate the RSIF PhD scholars and would like to remind them how fortunate they are at being selected, as *icipe* adopts a highly rigorous selection process. For example, for the 4<sup>th</sup> cohort of students in April 2022, there were 1,948 applications, from whom only 72 students were selected from 20 African countries.

As RSIF is a programme of the Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET), it is important for the PhD scholars to understand how the programme came about and the way PASET operates.

PASET is a World Bank initiative that was launched in 2013. Its governance structure comprises four main organs. First, at the highest level, is the Governing Council (GC) which is made up of mainly Ministers of Education of participating African countries, but which also includes representatives of the World Bank and other contributors. The next level is the Executive Board (EB), comprising senior representatives of the African Ministries who serve on the GC, the World Bank and also representatives of other contributing countries/organisations. Then we have the Secretariat which implements the decisions taken at the level of the GC and/or EB. Currently, the World Bank serves as Secretariat.

The fourth organ is the Consultative Advisory Group (CAG) which advises the EB on any matter referred to it or suggests to EB any activity that would help in promoting PASET's objectives. The CAG consists of some 13 members who are African academics, including from the African diaspora, and from the private sector, national agencies and international partner countries. It has a Chair and a Vice-Chair, both of whom are in attendance at the EB meetings. It should be noted that all CAG members serve in their individual capacity and do not represent any country or institution. I have had the privilege to be the Chair of CAG since its creation in 2014.

At one of CAG's earliest meetings, while considering suggestions for promoting research and innovation in Africa, the idea of mounting a programme for training PhDs was mooted. The two main reasons that prompted that suggestion were first, compared to other world regions, Africa was producing far fewer PhDs, especially in the fields of science and technology; and second, the proportion of academic staff in African universities who had a PhD was very low. Both of these were negatively affecting research output from Africa. Accordingly, in February 2015, CAG recommended to EB the mounting of a programme for increasing the production of PhDs in Africa, which eventually took shape as RSIF. The first PhD cohort was selected in 2018 and several of them will be graduating this year. To date, with the present cohort, there will be over 300 PhD students studying under RSIF.

RSIF is unique in many respects. It is, first of all, perhaps the only doctoral programme that is funded essentially by African governments. It also has different windows of funding. In addition to providing the doctoral students with scholarships, it helps in the capacity building of those African universities that host the students. It further facilitates the PhD students to spend some time at an international partner university under a sandwich programme to promote knowledge transfer. It also funds projects at African universities to promote research and innovation of direct relevance to Africa, and encourages linkages with industry. Its hallmark in all its activities is ensuring quality at every step.

Let me end by reminding the PhD scholars of the importance of the orientation and induction programme that is being run by *icipe*. There is increasing evidence that PhD students who attend such a programme are usually more successful, manage to complete their studies on time and derive greater benefits from their research. I therefore urge them to make full use of this programme.

I wish all the scholars the best of luck and success as they embark on an exciting journey of research.

---