



For Immediate Release

PRESS RELEASE

53 Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence Convene In-person for the First Time Post-Covid to Enhance the Drive toward Achieving Development Impact

7th ACE Impact Regional Workshop to hold from June 13-17, 2022

Accra, Ghana (May 30, 2022) - The 7th bi-annual meeting of the Africa Centres of Excellence for Development Impact (ACE Impact) is scheduled to take place from **13th-17th June 2022** in Cotonou, Benin. Considering the impact and mobility restrictions posed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ACE Impact stakeholders are meeting for the first time in-person in two years (the last in-person meeting was held in February 2020 in Abuja, Nigeria).

The meeting which will make provision for virtual participation is bringing together leaders of the fifty-three (53) Centres of Excellence, government representatives from the 11 participating countries, key higher education stakeholders, policy think tanks, and partners such as the World Bank, the French Development Agency (AFD) and the Association of African Universities (AAU).

Committed to enhancing the capacity of universities to deliver high-quality training and applied research to address regional development challenges, the ACE Impact project is convening stakeholders to accelerate project implementation by measuring the impact accrued and exploring ways to address bottlenecks. With the project reaching its Mid-Term Review (MTR) in 2021, results of the MTR process will be evaluated during the upcoming workshop, with the teams finalizing recommendations and next steps. ACE Impact is being implemented over a five-year duration, 2019-2024.

The workshop will further provide an opportunity for peer-learning and regional knowledge sharing among the centers and strengthen partnerships and networks to drive successful project implementation and sustainability. The meeting seeks to provide implementation support and share global best practices with centers on the project objectives, especially development impact, entrepreneurship and innovation, gender initiatives, digital transformation, and institutional impact activities.

In addition, selected students from the three centers in Benin will be given the opportunity to share their innovative research outputs during a poster exhibition on 14th June 2022 at the Palais des Congrès. The opening and closing sessions of the workshop will be held on 14th and 17th June, respectively, at 10:00 GMT+1.

The ACE Impact project remains committed to training and providing Africa with the needed skills in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM); Agriculture, Environment, Applied Social Science, Education, and Health to realize its economic transformation.



- END -

Note to Editors

A press conference will be held virtually/in person on 14th June 2022 at the **Palais des Congrès in Cotonou**. Benin To participate or for further information, kindly contact Millicent Afriyie via email makyei@aau.org.

Background Information:

The Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence (ACE) Project is a World Bank initiative in collaboration with governments of participating countries to support Higher Education institutions specializing in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), Agriculture, and Health. It is the first World Bank project aimed at the capacity building of higher education institutions in Africa. The first phase (ACE I) was launched in 2014 with 22 Centres of Excellence in Nine (9) West and Central African countries; Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, and Togo. The Project aims to promote regional specialization among participating universities in areas that address specific common regional development challenges. It also aims to strengthen the capacities of these universities to deliver high-quality training and applied research as well as meet the demand for skills required for Africa's development. The second phase (ACE II) was launched in East and Southern Africa with 24 centers across Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Based on the initial successes, the World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD) in collaboration with the African governments, launched the ACE Impact Project in 2018 to strengthen post-graduate training and applied research in existing fields and support new fields that are essential for Africa's economic growth. There are 43 ACEs (25 new ones and 18 from ACE I); 5 Emerging Centers; 1 “top up” center in Social Risk Management; and 5 Colleges and Schools of Engineering. The new areas include sustainable cities; sustainable power and energy; social sciences and education; transport; population health and policy; herbal medicine development and regulatory sciences; public health; applied informatics and communication; and pastoral production.

About Organizers

About the Association of African Universities (AAU): The Association of African Universities is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization created by African Universities to promote cooperation among them on the one hand, and between them and the international academic community on the other. Created in 1967, the AAU is the voice of higher education in Africa. AAU aims to improve the quality of African higher education and to strengthen its contribution to Africa's development by supporting the core functions of higher education institutions and facilitating critical reflection and consensus building on issues affecting higher education in Africa. The AAU is the Regional Facilitation Unit of the Africa Centres of Excellence project.

• **About the World Bank Group:** The World Bank Group is a multilateral development institution that works to reduce poverty and boost shared prosperity. Its subsidiary IDA (International



Development Association) finances the Africa Centres of Excellence series of projects. Established in 1960, IDA helps the world's poorest countries by providing grants and low to zero-interest loans for projects and programs that boost economic growth, reduce poverty, and improve poor people's lives. IDA is one of the largest sources of assistance for the world's 75 poorest countries, 39 of which are in Africa. Resources from IDA bring positive change to the 1.5 billion people who live in IDA countries. Since 1960, IDA has supported development work in 113 countries. Annual commitments have averaged about \$18 billion over the last three years, with about 54 percent going to Africa.

- **About the French Development Agency (AFD):** For more than 75 years, the French Development Agency (AFD) has been fighting global poverty by supporting policies and investments that benefit the poorest populations. Strengthening the social link between individuals, groups, and territories are now at the heart of its actions in education, health, employment, urban planning, climate or biodiversity