

# Educator challenges AAAS to join the search for Next Einstein

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African education leader Thierry Zomahoun called on global scientific community to pick up chalk and help him uncover a new Einstein in Africa. President and CEO of the African Institute of Mathematical Sciences (AIMS), Zomahoun delivered a speech to a packed room at the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual conference in Washington, D.C. He called on participants to join the cause for policies that support the education of African youth in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) instead of traditional development aid.

"At AIMS, we believe that the next Einstein will be African and that he or she will develop solutions that cross borders and change lives," Zomahoun says. "We need to enable Africa's youth to shape their future by training a new generation of scientific leaders."

In his speech, Zomahoun argued that despite the fact that Africa has been experiencing strong economic growth since 2000, it is facing tremendous challenges in educating the STEM graduates who can take the continent to the next level. African research still accounts for less than 1 per cent of the world's output. Of that only 29 per cent of this research is in STEM fields. He argues that encouraging collaboration and celebration of science in Africa will reap tremendous benefits for Africa and the world.

"At AIMS we are reinventing the university for the 21st century," says Zomahoun. "Our curriculum is linking education and development in

ways never seen before."

AIMS recruits some of Africa's most talented university graduates to provide them with a Master's level cutting-edge training in [mathematical sciences](#). The aim is to develop a generation of leaders trained in STEM to problem solve for better communities. The success of the program lies in recruiting world-class teachers, researchers and tutors to enhance students' academic experience. Zomahoun made a plea to AAAS attendees join the cause.

Founded in 2003 with its first centre in Cape Town, South Africa, AIMS is Africa's first network of centres of excellence in Mathematical Sciences. AIMS has gone on to establish centres in Ghana, Senegal, Cameroon and Tanzania. It will open its latest centre in Rwanda in 2016. A total of 15 AIMS centres across Africa are planned by 2023 through the AIMS-Next Einstein Initiative

"Our model works with 70 per cent of our graduates remaining on the continent," says Zomahoun. "Many take up positions in academic institutions across Africa and through our Industry Initiative, bridging into important private sector work in ICT, finance and health sectors to name a few." He adds that two thirds of AIMS graduates are pursuing PhDs in Africa and about 131 graduates are teaching at universities in 26 African nations.

Zomahoun also called attention to The Next Einstein Forum (NEF) in Dakar, Senegal, from the 8th to the 11th of March. Co-hosted by AIMS, the NEF is the first global forum for science in Africa. AIMS believes that it is Africa's time to lead on the global scientific stage. The NEF is a biennial gathering with stakeholders from science, policy, industry and society come together to leverage science for development.

AIMS-NEI is an important component of the United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals (GOAL 4), specifically for inclusive and quality education in Africa. AIMS's programs for tertiary education in Mathematical Sciences, training to improve math and science school teacher education and gender equity of scientist training are central to Africa's success in meeting these targets by 2030. Of our 960+ graduates, 31 per cent are women and the goal is to achieve half in the future.

He closed his speech with a broad call for attending scientists to come to Africa and join their fellow scientists to teach, collaborate and participate. He also told them to get their academic and research masters to become excited about the new possibilities emerging in the continent that gave birth to mathematics.

Provided by African Institute for Mathematical Sciences

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