




SOUTH AFRICA TO HOST REGIONAL OFFICE

Through a new association with the Academy of Science of South Africa, TWAS hopes to build its presence as a science and engineering leader across sub-Saharan Africa.

 by Sean Treacy

TWAS's regional office in sub-Saharan Africa is being transferred to South Africa, in a move to strengthen TWAS's presence and advance its mission on the continent.

The TWAS Regional Office for sub-Saharan Africa, also known as TWAS-ROSSA, will be based at the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) headquarters in Pretoria.

"Because of South Africa's strong research and educational institutions and its globally influential science policy leadership, we believe it will be an excellent host for the regional office and very capable of guiding its transition to a science centre," said TWAS Executive Director Romain Murenzi.

"ASSAf is greatly honoured to be identified as the new host of the TWAS Regional Office," said TWAS Fellow Roseanne Diab, executive officer of ASSAf and coordinator of the office. "We shall commit our resources to further the objectives of TWAS. The hosting represents an opportunity to strengthen our mutual interests in promoting young scientists and creating opportunities for them to become global players."

ROSSA is one of five TWAS regional offices, each based in a different region of the developing world. It had previously been based at the African Academy of Sciences in Nairobi, Kenya. The TWAS Council approved the change 27 January 2015 and it became effective 5 March.

Murenzi said TWAS-ROSSA had been the only one among the five offices that was not directly connected to a national government. The TWAS

Council was looking for that kind of relationship to help the office evolve into a regional science centre— and found it with South Africa.

"No other country in Africa has had the same commitment to TWAS," he said.

TWAS's 2009 General Meeting was hosted in Durban, South Africa. And in 2010, 2012, 2013, and 2014, South Africa sent either its science minister or another major policy leader to the meeting. South Africa's Ministry of Science and Technology has agreed to provide 70 PhD fellowships and 10 postdoctoral

▼ From left: Romain Murenzi, Naledi Pandor and Roseanne Diab.





▲ A new fellowship between the South African National Research Foundation and TWAS will benefit 240 early-career scientists. [Photo: Kate Holt/Africa Practice]

fellowships to TWAS through the South African National Research Foundation [NRF]. ASSAf also hosts a national chapter of the Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World [OWSD] an international organization based in Trieste, Italy, that works in close association with TWAS.

Murenzi visited ASSAf offices 17-20 June 2015 to inaugurate the new regional office. He also met with Diab and South African Minister of Science and Technology Naledi Pandor, and officially exchanged the signed fellowship agreement with acting NRF CEO Beverley Damonse.

The fellowship will run from 2015 to 2018, benefitting up to 240 early-career scientists from Africa by the time the agreement has ended.

According to Stanley Maphosa, the international liaison manager for ASSAf, TWAS-ROSSA is already preparing for a young scientists' conference on women's empowerment in science, which will be held in Pretoria in September. They hope to organize several such conferences each year and host them in different countries throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

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Romain Murenzi

It's also part of the office's duties to select TWAS Young Affiliates; winners of the annual TWAS Regional Prize; and young scientists to attend the annual life sciences forum Biovision.NXT in France.

ASSAf also plans to hire a web developer to shape the ROSSA website, to make it more user-friendly to those who might be interested in the office's news and announcements, said Maphosa.

“We want to make a website that's interactive and attractive,” he explained, “so it becomes an appealing website to use, and also to have a social media presence.”

