

**AISA Young Graduates and Scholars (AYGS) Academy and
Conference, 2018
11-16 March Gauteng, South Africa**

DRAFT CONCEPT NOTE

About AYGS Conference

The AISA Young Graduates and Scholars (AYGS) conference is a platform that was conceived by the Africa Institute of South Africa (AISA) in the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and organised annually to enable young scholars, to produce and share research-based knowledge about the development challenges facing Africa as well as to publish and disseminate their research findings. The event also enables AISA to facilitate capacity strengthening of the young scholars in various respects. Therefore, in March 2018, the 2-day conference will be hosted together with a 3-day Academy that will provide emerging scholars the opportunity to enhance an array of competencies and skills required in their post graduate studies. The scholars will be exposed to seasoned experts in research, as well as carry out robust discussions among themselves in a workshop format with a view to strengthen their capacity in research, publishing, and project management. AISA has identified these 3 focal areas as some of the key ingredients for the development of young scholars. For this edition, applicants from research and academic institutions in Africa are highly encouraged to submit their abstracts.

Conference Theme and Call for Abstracts:

***AFRICA'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION: OPPORTUNITIES,
CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD***

The desire to realize rapid socio-economic transformation in Africa has been on the international development agenda for many decades. Indeed, several national, regional and continental development strategies have been tried out in various contexts but most of these interventions have produced mixed results. Thus, the search for an effective model that may unlock reliable pathways for socio-economic development on the continent remains pertinent. The interventions so far tried out include import substitution; regional economic integration; economic structural adjustment; capacity building programmes targeted at improving governance on the continent; direct injection of national development aid by the international community; and national poverty reduction strategies. While several African countries made considerable strides in terms of socio-economic transformation under the guidance of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS), the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework in 2015 shows clearly that much more remains to be done.

Several scholars have already been promoting the “*Africa rising*” narrative to showcase the economic growth strides made in various parts of the continent in recent years. While this presents reason for hope, closer analysis will show that efforts at national socio-economic transformation across the continent have also yielded mixed results. Indeed, a myriad of problems and challenges have emerged that make the African socio-economic transformation journey a perilous one. These challenges include rapid but unsustainable urbanization characterized by, among others, growing slums, poor water and sanitation services; energy supply and infrastructural development deficits; remote rural areas whose livelihoods are now further threatened by a changing climate; poor national agricultural production performances leading to food insecurity; very resilient high unemployment levels; and questionable governance

structures and practices deeply embedded in corruption. These and other challenges have demonstrated that there is need for more qualitative and deeper analysis that unravels both the negative and positive growth prospects for the continent and the driving factors that explain particular socio-economic development trajectories. Therefore, research and scholarship is needed that helps to interrogate the key issues in this domain and identify workable solutions.

In this workshop, young graduate scholars will be facilitated to write and present scientific papers that explore the socio-economic development challenges and opportunities facing African countries from various academic stand-points. The pre-conference workshop and academy will be designed to build the capacity of young graduate scholars from universities in South Africa and a few others from the East and Southern Africa region. Special focus will be placed on the participants' awareness of and ability to engage with currently topical development challenges and opportunities facing the region in a scholarly manner; ability to conceptualize researchable topics, choose and deploy appropriate research methodologies and methods; ability to translate research results into publishable knowledge products; and ability to initiate and implement projects successfully. Prospective participants are invited to submit an abstract on the conference sub-topics demonstrating reasonable theoretical appreciation of the subject matter and/ or possibility of using available empirical data to subsequently develop a full paper that will be presented during the workshop and academy.

Conference Sub-topics:

(1) *Governance dimensions of Africa's sustainable development aspirations.*

The paradigm shift that has gained currency in recent years puts issues of "governance" at the heart of understanding development. This debatable perspective assumes that poor countries remain so due to bad governance, while; the success of countries that experience significant economic growth can be explained by their improved governance systems and institutions. This view of development is now guiding the mission of the World Bank. In trying to account for the African slow economic growth, a number of scholars have interrogated the direct causal link between good governance and rapid economic growth (Collier & O'Connell, 2008; Plateau, 2009; Radelet, 2010; Gualdani, 2012). Papers in this session will be expected to use empirical data and theoretical concepts to articulate how African countries have performed over the years in terms of good governance and the major drivers/ causal factors for poor governance and impacts thereof. Scholars may also address the debate on the causal linkages between good governance and national economic performance. Discourses on the scourge of failed states in Africa and the main drivers and potential solutions will also be relevant in this sub-theme.

(2) *Social cohesion, peace and nation building in Africa*

In his 1992 report titled *An Agenda for Peace*, former United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali defined peacebuilding as an action to solidify peace and avoid a relapse into conflict. On the other hand, national integration is the process of creating a sense of national consciousness, identity and loyalty among the citizens of a country despite belonging to different races, ethnic groups, religions, regions, or speaking different dialects or languages. The definitions above illustrate that the concepts of peace building and national integration go hand-in-hand with the goal of nation building. For South Africa, peace and national integration have been elusive since 1994 due to an enduring variety of factors despite efforts and resources committed to peace and integration (rainbow) projects. Despite the Truth and

Reconciliation (TRC), which emphasized reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction, South Africa has continued to drift towards increased social and economic cleavages. Based on the foregoing, therefore, submissions/abstracts could include, but not limited to, transdisciplinary submissions on, (i) Peacebuilding and national integration in Africa (ii) Women, peace building and national integration in Africa; (iii) Dynamics of domestic violence in: What is the role of social engineering?

(3) *Agriculture and food security in national development processes*

The role that agriculture plays in national economic development and poverty alleviation potential in Sub Sahara Africa (SSA) has been a matter of intense debate for many years. Therefore, countries in SSA should take the results of this debate into account when designing their national macroeconomic policies. There is sufficient scholarship that focuses on this aspect of national development. For instance, Buluswar et al. (2014) articulates in detail some of the key issues in this domain. He points out that the Green Revolution that started in the 1960s and is widely considered one of the most successful large-scale programs to help alleviate poverty and improve food security, in the history of international development (UNDP, 2014) and has led to a dramatic increase in food production in South Asia, while SSA has lagged behind. It Papers in this session will be expected to use empirical and/ theoretical underpinnings to articulate how African countries can implement their own 'small' green revolutions and attain higher levels of production. This includes detailed assessments and articulation of the impacts and outcomes of land reform programs implemented in various developing countries, as well as deployment of the so-called 'smart' agricultural practices. Challenges and opportunities evident in this domain will need to be discussed as well as how they may be addressed.

(4) *Role of science, technology and innovation in African development processes*

Across the world, the rise in popularity and spread of the '*knowledge-economy*' has opened up virtually all societies to increased pressure to attain global standards of productivity in science, technology and innovation (STI). The Rio+20 Conference re-affirmed the importance of science, technology and innovation (STI) as a key component of a knowledge-based global economy. In most parts of the world, STI has already been recognized as a 'game-changer' in efforts to address a wide spectrum of challenges that have a direct bearing on local and national socio-economic transformation, poverty eradication, and sustainable development. Its utility in addressing challenges in sectors such as agriculture and food production, industry, energy, and water resources is no longer in question. While foreign expertise could be deployed for many purposes, certain foundational functions—including the identification of needs and the making of basic policy choices - are best performed by local researchers (Sawyerr, 2004). Therefore, locally-led STI is recognized as an important driver for economic progress, national competitiveness, and societal well-being. In this thematic area, scholars will be expected to use empirical and/ theoretical frameworks to articulate the role that STI already plays in enabling sustainable economic growth in SSA. What are the challenges and opportunities evident in this terrain and how may they be addressed? Discourses on transitioning towards green economies and renewable energy supply systems will also be relevant in this sub-theme.

Submission Guidelines for AYGS 2018

AYGS 2018 invites contributions from emerging scholars from Africa who are interested in and concerned with the imperatives for rapid economic transformation on the African continent. “Emerging” refers to candidates enrolled for either a Masters’ Degree or a PhD. Submissions should contribute to developing new thinking and fresh debate on Africa’s socio-economic transformation in the age of globalization.

All abstract submissions should have the following format:

Abstract: Maximum of 300 words

Keywords: 5 keywords

Bio: 100 - word author biography, including email address

Selected candidates will be asked to submit their full draft papers (6 000 words max).

Abstracts for Poster Presentations

Academic posters are fast becoming an important part of conference experiences and a powerful form of presenting research in an interesting and accessible way. At this year’s AYGS we would like to invite interested emerging scholars to submit an abstract for poster presentation relating to the conference theme.

NB: Participants for poster presentation will not be included in the pre-conference Academy.

Abstracts and contributions must be written in English and in a style accessible to a wide audience.

Please submit your abstracts to Rodney Managa on: RManaga@hsrc.ac.za with copy to Elize Van As on: evanas@hsrc.ac.za

Important Dates and Deadlines

Deadline for submission of Abstracts: 10th October 2017.

Notification of Accepted Abstracts: 31 October 2017

Submission of Full Draft Manuscripts: 15 January 2017

Academy & Conference Dates: 11 – 16 March 2017

Selection and Editing Process

All submissions will be peer-reviewed through a double blind peer-review process coordinated by the Scientific Committee at AISA. Successful and unsuccessful submissions will be notified as soon as the reviewers complete the reviews.

For any further information or clarity regarding your submission please do not hesitate to contact: Dr. Shingirirai Mutanga on Email: smutanga@hsrc.ac.za Tel: +27123169770