



East African Community

One People, One Destiny



EAST AFRICAN
YOUTH INNOVATION FORUM

For Immediate Release

ATTENTION: MANAGING EDITOR
THE EASTAFRICAN

Innovations cause 50pc of growth – Ugandan minister **Six innovators from across East Africa receive presidential awards for their** **respective countries in recognition of outstanding initiatives**

Nairobi, 18 November 2022.... The inaugural East African Youth Innovation Forum has said that science, technology and innovation (STI) are responsible for at least 50 per cent of growth in the global marketplace.

Speaking during the conference last week, Uganda's Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation Dr Monica Masanza described STI as a crucial driver for development. "When a country adopts innovation, its people produce more with the same amount or fewer resources, thereby increasing productivity which then grows the economy."

Six innovators from across East Africa were awarded presidential awards for their respective countries during the conference in recognition of outstanding initiatives. They included Joseph Nguthiru, a student in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Egerton University; Elisha Kato, an electrical engineering student at the University of Dar es Salaam; and Rachel Hakim of South Sudan.

Others who won the presidential awards were Enock Abayinsenga of Rwanda, Eraste Nduwayo of Burundi, and Steven Kakooza of Uganda.

The presidential awards seek to recognize outstanding applications developed by East African youth as well as outstanding youth innovators who are enabling the local innovation eco-system.

The youth innovation programme was advertised in the media in each partner state and on the EAC and EASTECO websites. Applications were accepted online from eligible young innovators below 35 years of age in eight priority categories



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– namely, agriculture, health, education, climate change and environment, ICT mobile applications, energy and infrastructure, industrialization and trade, and aeronautics and space technology.

"The East African youth innovators were selected competitively from the six EAC countries," the judges said. "The selection was based on the following criteria: Originality, marketability, scalability, social impact, and technical aspects."

The entries were evaluated by a national panel of experts comprising the ministries responsible for Science, Technology and Innovation, the National Council of Science and Technology, and ministries responsible for EAC Affairs in each partner state, together with other stakeholders.

The innovations covered a wide range of areas, from creating biodegradable alternatives to single-use plastic products from water hyacinth in Kenya to making a rice planting machine in Rwanda.

Uganda's winning innovation is called the Kawu card, which enables student cardholders to receive, withdraw, or spend money without the need to have a mobile phone, tablet or other gadget. South Sudan's winner, the only woman to receive an award, was recognized for GogoPlay, a digital entertainment platform aimed at growing the entertainment industry in the country through the promotion, exposure, and marketing of high quality content.

Tanzania's winning innovation featured revolutionary smart energy meters that track real-time power consumption, while Burundi presented an innovation that combines smart lighting, energy saving, and comfort.

The Democratic Republic of Congo, which only recently joined the East African Community, was not represented at the Forum, which took place in Kampala, Uganda, from November 8-9.

The meeting brought together young researchers, developers and innovators, entrepreneurs, finance actors, academia and public policy makers to discuss the regional situation and latest trends in research and development as well as innovation and product development.



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Among other things, the Forum addressed itself to the challenges that the youth in the region face in advancing their talent in technological development, in addition to the opportunities available for innovation in the regional marketplace and globally.

This way, it is hoped that the Forum will have offered a platform to catalyse the effective engagement of young people in steering the course of future developments within the East African Community (EAC) through innovations.

The conference was organized by the East African Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO), under the auspices of the EAC.

The Forum aims to create a regional platform that will stimulate and support young innovators in generating scientific and technological innovative solutions to social needs and to meet market demand.

The Youth Innovation Forum further hopes to enable the youth to create social enterprises that aim to cure social problems through innovative practices. It is aimed at empowering youngsters to steer their own initiatives and contribute to the building of a prosperous and independent society.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS:

According to the East African Community, in 2014, up to 34 per cent of the total population of five of the EAC partner states (Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda) was between 15 and 34 years of age, which is the active youth bracket. In 2016, South Sudan joined the Community, bringing the population of the region to 158 million.

With an overall population growth of around 2.9 per cent and the progress of the national education systems within the EAC region, the youth population is not only growing but it is also getting better education.

If this human capital is channelled toward productive and innovative sectors of the economy, the youth population will offer tremendous opportunities as a major instrument for the social and economic development of the EAC Partner States and for a high competitiveness on the global market.

However, failing to prepare and to harness the youth population as businessmen and worker transformation leaders would lead to significant threats to social and community cohesion as well as political and governmental stability. This, in turn, would significantly affect the regional integration agenda.

Therefore, EASTECO, being the lead institution for the EAC in developing and promoting technological innovation within partner states, is playing a critical role in ensuring that the region's talented youth are promoted and become performing actors and future leaders for the industrial and enterprise sectors. In this regard, the Youth Innovation Forum will offer a platform to catalyse the effective engagement of young people in steering the course of future developments within the EAC.

For additional information on the East African Youth Innovation Forum, please go to: <https://eayouthinnovationforum.com/>

ABOUT EASTECO

The East African Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO) is a semi-autonomous institution of the East African Community (EAC). The operationalization of the Commission was finalized in 2015 with the appointment of a Secretariat. The EASTECO headquarters offices are in Kigali, Rwanda.

The main objective of the Commission is to promote and coordinate the development, management and application of Science and Technology in the Partner States



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(composed of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda). Therefore, EASTECO has an overall function of coordinating and facilitating the activities of the EAC Partner States and national science and technology institutions to promote the development and application of science, technology and innovation in all its aspects.