



TYAN: WORKING AND NETWORKING

The new TWAS Young Affiliates Network will give early-career scientists a platform for high-level engagement and a strong voice in global science.

 by Cristina Serra

They are young and enthusiastic scientists from developing countries and have joined forces to promote joint research and new partnerships in the South. The just-launched TWAS Young Affiliates Network [TYAN] will give young scientists a more prominent role within the Academy and a stronger voice globally.

TYAN's members will be positioned to provide TWAS with important feedback on the needs of young scientists in developing countries, and they plan to have a global impact by creating new partnerships, sharing knowledge and problems and building networks for cooperation. They will provide feedback on various issues of sustainable development, while exploring issues related to the social responsibilities of scientists and the popularisation of science.

TYAN was officially launched during the TWAS 27th General Meeting in Kigali, Rwanda. "The founding and development of TYAN is a good platform for collaboration and communication among young scientists," said TWAS President Bai Chunli, who also serves as president of the Chinese Academy of Sciences [CAS]. "I think that TYAN will become a platform where young scientists can make contributions to the excellence of science, and also encourage collaboration in developing countries. I believe that, with its wisdom and capacity, TYAN will be successful for the future."

The TWAS Young Affiliate programme was launched in 2007 to strengthen the presence of scientists under the age of 40 in the Academy, and to take advantage of their perspective and energy. Every year, TWAS's five Regional Offices

each select up to five Affiliates. After a five-year term, they become Alumni.

TYAN was envisioned a few years ago by Yin Li, the director of the CAS-TWAS Centre of Excellence for Biotechnology in Beijing. TWAS and CAS welcomed the proposal, and the Chinese company Lenovo, the largest PC company in the world, is supporting the initiative with a three-year grant of USD150,000 per year.

"I was elected as a TWAS Young Affiliate in 2010 and I attended my first TWAS General Meeting in Trieste, in 2011," Li said. "I realized that Young Affiliates are a powerful resource for the Academy, but that at the same time they play a minor role in TWAS's family." Often, he explained, they feel they have to take a back seat to senior scientists who are TWAS Fellows. That means they have less engagement, and less impact on the Academy.

"There is a vertical connection between them and TWAS, not a horizontal relationship as there should be," Li stated. "I felt I had to do something."

Li was awarded the 2012 TWAS Regional Prize for Building Scientific Institutions. He is also the deputy director-general at the Tianjin Institute of Industrial Biotechnology, a non-profit national research institute established in 2012. He serves as a professor at the CAS Institute of Microbiology in Beijing, which is currently the nation's largest comprehensive research institution of microbiological science.

TWAS Programme Coordinator Max Paoli said: "TYAN is a strategic initiative that will bring fresh energy and creativity to the Academy."



▲ TYAN Affiliates in Kigali. [Photo: Robert Mugabe/Rwandan Minister of Education]

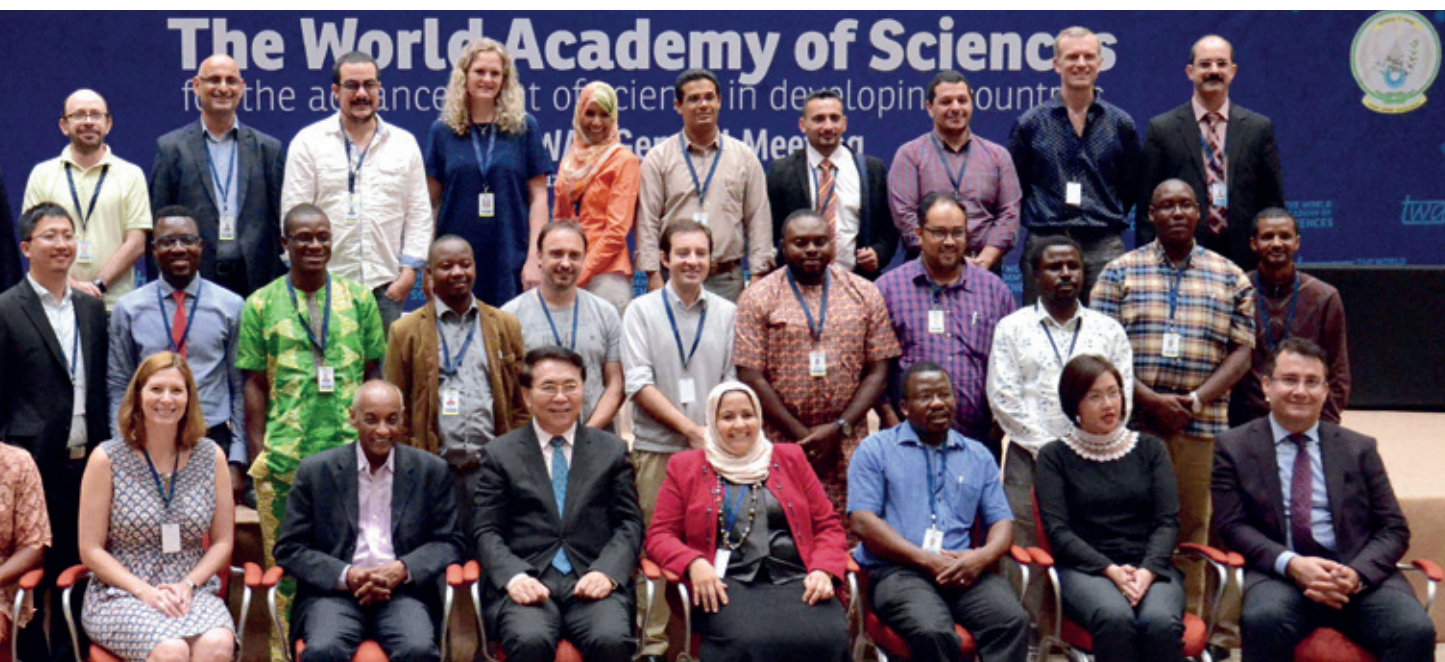
“At present, we have some 250 Young Affiliates and Alumni,” Paoli added. “About 60 of them have enthusiastically agreed to participate in this project, and we are confident that many more will join us when the group becomes fully operative.”

In Kigali, TYAN members discussed activities that they should pursue in the future, like strengthening the relationship with organisations such as the Global Young Academy.

On 16 November they elected the first TYAN Executive Committee, with gender and

a senior lecturer at Federal University of Technology in Akure, Nigeria; Collet Dandara, an associate professor at University of Cape Town, South Africa; Sok Ching Cheong, a group leader at Cancer Research Initiatives Foundation, Selangor, Malaysia; and Yusuf Baran, a professor at Abdullah Gul University in Kayseri, Turkey.

“TYAN will help all of us to expand our networks as well as our students’ opportunities to pay for exchange visits to foreign laboratories,” said Zancan, who studies cancer metabolism.



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At the meeting, Zancan made an important announcement: In 2017, Brazil will host the first TYAN meeting, under the aegis of the TWAS’s Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean and the International Council for Science (ICSU) Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean. The meeting will take place in Rio de Janeiro, with support from the Brazilian Academy of Science.

Baran studies molecular mechanisms of drug resistance in cancer. He too sees great potential for TYAN. “We are a family from around the world and we have to work hard,” he said. “I believe that science is the best way to bring peace, to provide sustainable and economic development, and to use diplomacy around the world.”

geographical balance. Along with Li, other members are: Jalila Ben Salah-Abbès, an associate professor at the Higher Institute of Biotechnology in Monastir, Tunisia; Patricia Zancan, an associate professor at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Franco Martin Cabrerizo, an associate professor at Ilb-Intech, in Chascomús, Argentina; Bolanle Ade Ojokoh,

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