

4

YEAR 2003
OCT - DEC
VOL.15 NO.4

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TWAS newsletter

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE THIRD WORLD ACADEMY OF SCIENCES



Published with the support of the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences

PEOPLE, PLACES, EVENTS

BORLAUG PROMOTES BIOTECH

• **Norman Borlaug** (TWAS Associate Fellow 1985 and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate 1970) gave the keynote address at the Ministerial Conference and Expo on Agricultural Science and Technology held in Sacramento, California, from 23-25 June. The conference focused on the critical role that science and technology, including biotechnology, can play in raising agricultural productivity in developing countries. Sponsored by the US Department of State, the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the meeting was attended by representatives from 115 countries and 13 international organizations. In his address, Borlaug stressed that Africa, because of its problems with declining soil fertility, its slow uptake of new technologies, its poor health and education services and its high population growth, is the region that presents the greatest food security concerns. Efforts to reduce the chronic hunger that affects the continent should be accelerated, said Borlaug, to avoid an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. However, Borlaug also maintained that: "The world has the technology, either available or well advanced in the

research pipeline, to feed 10 billion people." Continued research and development of technology, especially biotechnology, is critical to meeting this challenge, he added.

PRIZE FOR TWOWS AWARDEE

• **Fernande Fotsa-Ngaffo**, who has been awarded a fellowship by the Third World Organization for Women in Science (TWOWS), has received South Africa's First Young Women in Science Award. The prize, awarded in the presence of

the Best Young Women in Science Award for her presentation during the International Conference on Optic and Laser Applications held in Windhoek, Namibia, 10-14 August. The conference was co-organized by University of Witwatersrand, the University of Namibia, the International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) and the International Union of Pure and Applied Physicists (IUPAP).

AIMS FOR AFRICA

• The African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) has been established in Cape Town, South Africa, with the goal of strengthening scientific and technological capacity across the continent. AIMS is a collaborative project between three South African universities, Cape Town, Stellenbosch and the Western Cape, as well as the University of Cambridge, UK, the University of Oxford, UK, and the University of Paris-Sud-XI, France. The institute is located in Muizenburg, Cape Town, in a former art-deco hotel that has been donated to the project. To date, over US\$1.3 million has been secured. It is estimated that US\$2 million will be required to cover operational costs for the first three years. AIMS will initially focus on a one-year post-graduate diploma course designed to develop strong mathematical and computing problem-solving skills. Courses, which include quantum physics, epidemiological modelling and financial mathematics, will be taught by eminent lecturers from Africa, the three collaborating European universities and elsewhere. Students with degrees in mathematics, science or engi-



Fernande Fotsa-Ngaffo

Adi Patterson, South Africa's deputy minister and deputy director general of the Department of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology, includes a gold medal and 100,000 rands (US\$14,000). Cameroon-born Fotsa-Ngaffo, who has a master's degree in physics, was awarded the TWOWS fellowship in 2002, which enabled her to travel to the Material Physics Institute, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. There, under the supervision of Malik Maaza, she is carrying out research for her PhD into the potential of titanium dioxide nanocrystals to improve the energy efficiency of solar cells. Ngaffo, who plans to receive her doctorate by 2006, also received



Norman Borlaug