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PRESS RELEASE

Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence for Development Impact (ACE Impact) Project Facilitates Achievement of Continental Development Amid Current Global Pandemic

53 Centres of Excellence to Convene Virtually from October 19th – 27th, 2020

Accra, Ghana (October 17th, 2020) - The Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence for Development Impact (ACE Impact) will be organizing its 4th biannual Regional Workshop (ACE Impact Fall 2020 Virtual Workshop) from **October 19-27, 2020**. Due to restrictions on mobility imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to ensure the safety of all participants, the meeting will be held virtually. The meeting will bring together the 53 Centres of Excellence and key stakeholders including government representatives from participating countries, Vice Chancellors, players of the higher education sector, the private sector, policy think tanks, and partners including the World Bank, the French Development Agency and the Association of African Universities.

The overarching objective of the ACE Impact , October 2020 Virtual Workshop is to provide participating Centers, their host institutions, and governments with the tools and information necessary to implement the project and help achieve its objectives despite the current global pandemic, which has had a significant impact on all aspects of higher education. The ACE impact project broadly targets strengthening post-graduate training and applied research in existing fields and supporting new fields that are essential for Africa's economic growth.

Specific key focus areas of the Workshop include:

- i. Provide Centers the opportunity to share and to learn best practices on higher education excellence and relevance
- ii. Take stock of the status of progress towards fulfilling the Implementation Plans, earning Disbursement Linked Indicators (DLIs) and advancing Center and project objectives
- iii. Share global best practice on institutional resilience, re-opening universities, and digital education
- iv. Plan key next steps for each country, institution, and Center in implementing projects in challenging social, health and academic environments
- v. Provide clear guidance on requirements for disbursement, fiduciary and safeguards matters

- vi. Provide networking and collaboration opportunities for the Centers.

The official opening of the meeting will be held on Tuesday October 20, 2020 and will be presided over by Ms. Meskerem Mulatu, World Bank Education Practice Manager, West Africa. Additional planned workshop activities include implementation support and peer learning sessions for all the participating Centers across the various thematic areas of the project - Agriculture, Health and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM). The virtual workshop will also feature operational clinics on Monitoring & Evaluation, Procurement and Financial Management. These sessions are aimed at equipping the participating ACEs and their host institutions with the needed tools to help them improve their project effectiveness and Implementation.

Additionally, there will be a Project Steering Committee (PSC) meeting which is scheduled to take place on the 19th of October 2020. The PSC comprises representatives of all participating countries, regional bodies, and industry. They serve as the policy making body of the project.

The ACE Impact project will continue to adopt innovative approaches towards strengthening the Centres and their host Institutions to become excellent and responsive to the continent's developmental needs. We continue to count on the support of all stakeholders and look forward to their active participation in the upcoming 4th Regional Workshop, in their respective capacities.

Note to Editors

For further information, kindly contact Millicent Afriyie Kyei via email makyei@aau.org

Background information:

The Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence (ACE) Project is a World Bank initiative in collaboration with governments of participating countries to support Higher Education institutions in specializing in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), Agriculture, and Health. It is the first World Bank project aimed at the capacity building of higher education institutions in Africa. The first phase (ACE I) was launched in 2014 with 22 Centres of Excellence in Nine (9) West and Central African countries; Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo. The Project aims to promote regional specialization among participating universities in areas that address specific common regional development challenges. It also aims to strengthen the capacities of these universities to deliver high quality training and applied research as well as meet the demand for skills required for Africa's development. The second phase (ACE II) was launched in East and Southern Africa with 24 centers across Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

Based on the initial successes, the World Bank and the French Development Agency (AFD) in collaboration with the African governments, launched the ACE Impact Project in 2018 to strengthen post-graduate training and applied research in existing fields and support new fields that are essential for Africa's economic growth. There are 43 ACEs (25 new ones and 18 from ACE I); 5 Emerging Centers; 1 "top up" center in Social Risk Management; and 5 Colleges and Schools of Engineering. The new areas include sustainable cities; sustainable power and energy; social sciences and education; transport; population health and policy; herbal medicine development and regulatory sciences; public health; applied informatics and communication; and pastoral production.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE ORGANISERS

- **About the Association of African Universities (AAU).** *The Association of African Universities is an international non-profit, non-governmental organization created by African Universities to promote cooperation among them on the one hand, and between them and the international academic community on the other. Created in 1967, the AAU is the voice of higher education in Africa. AAU aims to improve the quality of African higher education, and to strengthen its contribution to Africa's development by supporting the core functions of higher education institutions and facilitating critical reflection and consensus building on issues affecting higher education in Africa. The AAU is the Regional Facilitation Unit of the Africa Centres of Excellence project.*
- **About the World Bank Group.** *The World Bank Group is a multilateral development institution that works to reduce poverty. Its subsidiary IDA (International Development Association), which finances the Africa Centres of Excellence series of projects and was founded in 1960, provides interest-free grants and credits to the poorest countries to help them implement projects and programmes that stimulate economic growth, contribute to poverty reduction and improve the living conditions of the poor. IDA is one of the largest donors to the 77 poorest countries in the world, 39 of which are in Africa. IDA's resources concretely benefit 1.3 billion people. Since its inception, IDA has supported activities in 112 countries. The annual volume of its commitments has averaged \$19 billion over the past three years, with about 50 per cent of that amount going to Africa.*
- **About the French Development Agency.** *For more than 75 years, the French Development Agency (AFD) has been fighting global poverty by supporting policies and investments that benefit the poorest populations. Strengthening the social link between individuals, groups and territories is now at the heart of its actions in education, health, employment, urban planning, climate or biodiversity. For AFD, balanced development requires a real reduction in inequalities.*