

Challenges in Establishing an Academy of Sciences

**The case of the *Ethiopian Academy of
Sciences***

Cape Town November, 2010

Broaching the idea

- **The challenge of initiating the discussion**
- **The story of the established academies**
- **Legitimacy - The roles of individuals, professional societies, government initiative**
- **Broad base – consensus seeking & deliberation by different stakeholders**
- **Multilevel**

Historical Background

- Aklilu Lemma's initiative in the late 60s
- Ethiopian Science and Technology Commission in 1975
- Attempt by successive commissioners to establish a science academy in Ethiopia
- Individual attempts

Informal discussions

- End of 2007 series of discussions among group of scientists (email discussion)

A basic consensus that

Only the growth of an indigenous culture of science can form the basis for sustainable growth

Manifestations of poor culture of science

- Lack of understanding, support and commitment from government to scientific research and its requirements
- Absence of instruments of dialogue between government and the scientific community
- Lack of cooperation and collaboration within the scientific community

- Absence of consensus building for setting priorities and approaches on problems of science education, development and research;
- Lack of sustained support to training scientists for attaining critical mass,
- Inefficient communication systems for advancing knowledge and
- Existence of an unsympathetic bureaucratic system.

Challenges of establishing a science academy

- **Engaging, representational, legitimate**
- **Meeting of representatives of professional societies & academia**

January 3/2008 Consensus

- Establishment of merit based independent Ethiopian Academy of Sciences is both timely and relevant;
- EAS should be all inclusive beginning with divisions that will grow with time based on the strength of the individual disciplines they represent;

- EAS should be established with full support and commitment from government which should be convinced from the outset on the importance and usefulness of an independent Academy;

- That discussion on the issue should be held first within an email-group and widely read newspapers, magazines and finally in a workshop that should create a national committee which should facilitate the establishment of EAS; and
- A multidisciplinary ad-hoc committee be established to guide the process.

The Ad-hoc Committee

- Met regularly (once every week) for close to nine months from May 2008
- Defined its task
 - Drafting the Concept Note for the establishment of the Ethiopian Academy of Science,
 - preparing for and generating support for convening a National Conference.

Achievements of Ad-hoc Committee

- Concept Note was circulated within the scientific community as widely as possible and was well received
- Dossier of background material for deliberations was prepared
- Much enthusiasm from non-resident Ethiopians from Europe and America.
- Care taken not to be carried away

The National Conference of February 13, 2009

- National Conference was a milestone
 - Attended by about 250 participants from different disciplines
 - researchers, academia, government ministries
 - NASAC, KNAS, Royal Society
 - Opened by Minister of Science & Technology

The National Conference of February 13, 2009

- It heard the experiences of established Academies and discussed the roles of EAS
- Debated on the name and scope of the Academy and the next course of the establishment process.
- The Conference formed a Launching Board for the establishment of EAS, and discussed and agreed upon TOR

Launching Board of EAS

- Composition: 9 members representing various disciplines including a representative of Minister of Sc & Tech
- Major tasks of the Launching Board
 - ❖ Securing office space, furniture, some equipment and staffing
 - ❖ Drafting the Statute
 - ❖ Developing criteria for and selecting Founding Fellows
 - ❖ Registering the Academy with Ministry of Justice
 - ❖ Launching the Academy.

Criteria for Seleccion

1 Professional contribution:

Publication of research articles in reputed international and local journals, books, book chapters authored, co-authored, edited, or

other professional contribution (for fields where contribution to knowledge, art or culture is not necessarily through publication in learned journals or books);

Criteria for Selection

- 2 International Stature of the candidate as a scholar/scientist/professional;
- 3 Contribution of the candidate to the growth of ones own field of specialization, -Institution building/capacity building;
- 4 Contribution of the candidate to the growth of knowledge/scholarship, education, etc., other than in his/her area of specialization

Major Challenge

- Disparity among the disciplines in the four broad categories and especially in the extent of professional contribution.
- Founding Fellows (49)
 - 13 Natural sciences,
 - 10 Social sciences and Humanities,
 - 8 From the Health Sciences,
 - 7 Engineering, 9 Agricultural sciences
 - 2 The fine arts

Launch of the Conference

- The EAS was launched on the 10th of April, 2010
- (attended by about 13 national Academies from Europe, Africa and America, wide national representation)
- We got legalized by registering in the Ministry of Justice
- Developed our strategic plan

Currently:

- Dialogue with Government officials for a parliamentary act
- The Challenge
 - Delicate balance of government support and independence
 - Ingrained tradition of state control
 - Accentuated by socialist ethos
 - Fate of past initiatives

Currently:

- Effort to get custody of a historical building
- Communicating with partners to get starting fund

Wish us good luck