

Microsymposium

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UNESCO activities in Africa for the 2014 International Year of Crystallography (IYCr)

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Following the United Nations General Assembly (Decision A/66/L.51) declaration of 2014 as the International Year of Crystallography (IYCr2014), UNESCO and IUCr received a strong mandate to coordinate the activities of the Year in order to tackle the global disaffection from science and scientific careers, namely in crystallography, that threatens scientific enterprise innovation and sustainability and, consequently, the prospects for using science for development, especially in Africa. In addition, the crystallography capacity-gap between the wealthiest and the poorest regions of the world is increasing due to brain drain, the weakness of local expertise, the absence of linkage between science policy and the regional community of crystallographers, as well as the lack of inclusion of Africa in international scientific cooperation. For developing countries in Africa, it is therefore vital to be in a position to exploit the opportunities that crystallography and the IYCr2014 offer in terms of building, nurturing and maintaining a critical mass of highly qualified, innovative scientists, students and engineers in crystallography-related fields. For all those reasons, UNESCO seizes the opportunities presented by the International Year to foster crystallography education, research and cooperation and its use and applications, which are providing solutions to some of the developmental challenges that Africa is facing today. Some of the UNESCO/IUCr flagships initiatives echoing to this strategy are both the IUCr-UNESCO OpenLabs (a network of operational crystallographic laboratories) in Africa and the Regional Summit meeting in Bloemfontein, South Africa.

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