

**REPORT ON THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF WOMEN IN
SCIENCE - WOMEN IN SCIENCE WITHOUT BORDERS (WISWB) HELD FROM
21ST – 23RD MARCH, 2017 IN CAIRO, EGYPT**

BY

TYAN MEMBERS (PATRICIA ZANCAN AND BOLANLE OJOKOH)

This report presents our experience at the 1st International Conference of Women in Science – Women in Science Without Borders (WISWB), held on March 21-23, 2017 in Cairo, Egypt. The conference was organized by the Egyptian Academy for Scientific Research and Technology (ASRT) in cooperation with the Egyptian Young Academy for Sciences (EYAS) and the Egyptian Ministry for Higher Education and Scientific Research.

For this conference, more than 2500 candidates applied to attend the WISWB. At the time of the conference, more than 105 abstracts were accepted for presentation, hence it was a time of critical state of the art discussion of researchers invited from 27 different countries in different scientific research fields.

Patricia and Bolanle arrived Cairo on 20th March and the early hours of 21st March, respectively, and joined the other conference participants in the same hotel which was the venue of the conference on the first day and got registered before the opening ceremony started. Registration was free for all participants.

At the opening ceremony, Prof. Dr. Mahmoud Sakr, President of Egyptian academy for scientific research delivered an opening speech. The Chair of the conference, Ass. Prof. Dr. Amal Amin, also presented a speech speaking about the significance of the conference, introduced the conference sponsors and the constitution of participants. The event was introduced to be organized under auspices of the ministry for higher education and scientific research and organized by Egyptian young academy under supervision of Egyptian academy for scientific research and technology.

The conference was stated to be generally supported by Wellcome trust, Elsevier, L'Oreal, International Council for Science (ICSU), TWAS Young Affiliates Network (TYAN), Global Young Academy (GYA) and European commission, with UNESCO, national council for women being honorary supporters.

A plenary session followed the opening ceremony, with four distinguished women scientists that gave interesting and eye opening presentations. In the conference, a particular seminar I found very interesting was the one delivered by **Dr. Charon Duermeijer**, that will be very useful paper authors. The parallel sessions followed each of the day's general sessions with presentations in five tracks: **Biology-Medicine-Pharmacy, Materials-Engineering-Energy, and Gender Issues-Sustainable Development-Innovation, Food Technology–Agriculture-Veterinary Medicine, and Environment.**

The conference also included competitive students' presentations among students from 2nd grades of scientific faculties to the stage of pre-PhD. The contestants were asked to form teams in 5 fields related to sustainable development vis a vis Food, Environment, Health, Education, and Renewable Energy. The conference comprised of more than 105 presentations

in addition to the poster sessions. The last day of the conference comprises the activities of local speakers as the best picks from the Egyptian universities.

Patricia Zancan, an Associate Professor at UFRJ, Brazil and Co-Chair of TYAN was one of the speakers at the conference. She sincerely thanks Prof. Amal Amin, Chair of the WISWB conference, and TYAN for the opportunity and for making the conference successful in bringing together people from different disciplines, to present stimulating discussions about their findings, approaches, methodologies, and implications of the gender issues. Her personal experience was that she was fascinated by the lecture presented by the breathtaking lecture delivered by Dr Quarraisha Abdool Karin about the prevention of HIV infection in young women in Africa by the program CAPRISA. It was so hard because of the numbers and facts but at the same time so encouraging because of the results that they're reaching. Additionally, to have contact with successful histories as such from Dr Hayat Sindi or Dr Rana Dajani was stimulating. The conference stimulated many cross border discussions about challenging global issues such as promoting women in science and sustainable development. Opportunities such as these spur active discussions that would lead to mutually beneficial collaborations. In addition, the networking opportunities enable researchers to establishing new research projects, joint applications for funds, and technology transfer.

Bolanle Ojokoh, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science of the Federal University of Technology, Akure, Nigeria, also a TYAN Executive Board member, also presented a paper on the second day of the conference. She also found the conference as an opportunity to inform the participants in her session about the TWAS Young Affiliates Network (TYAN) (that sponsored her travel ticket to attend the conference) and the upcoming First International Rio Conference. It was an interesting meeting with female and male scientists from different parts of the world. She exchanged complimentary cards with some of them, and intends to further build on the ideas that they shared. She was particularly educated by the Seminar presented by Dr. Duermeijer from Elsevier and challenged by Dr. Hayat Sindi's presentation on "Living through Innovation" and her contribution to Science and Technology in spite of her gender. She is really grateful to the sponsors of the conference for the hospitality – provision of accommodation and food, and TYAN for the travel sponsorship, and particularly Dr. Amal Amin, who helped out when she found it difficult to obtain a visa to travel down to Egypt.

Prof. Bo Yu, the Deputy Director, CAS-TWAS Centre of Excellence for Biotechnology, Beijing, China also attended the Conference on behalf of the TYAN Chair, Prof. Yin Li. Being his first opportunity to visit Africa, he was impressed about the friendliness of the people, the history and the beautiful scenery of the land. He presented his paper during one of the technical sessions and also engaged in some discussions that could foster possible future collaborations. During his presentation, he introduced the CAS President's International Fellowship Initiative and lots of students were interested and talked to him about the details.

The conference was also an opportunity for the presentation of TYAN. Apart from enlightening people about the network during our presentations, the executive members present in Cairo discussed about the forthcoming International Conference to hold in August in Rio. TYAN was introduced to Dr Daniel Nyanganyura, Regional Director of the International Council for Science (Regional Office for Africa) who was committed to assisting TYAN with financial support to enable young members of TWAS to participate in

the 1st TYAN Conference. Additionally, the WISWB Conference Co-Chair, Dr Amal Amin discussed about the possibility of her attending the Rio Conference. In addition, Patricia met with a Brazilian residing in UK, Maria Augusta Arruda, a researcher responsible for promoting interactions between Brazil and the United Kingdom and involved with aspects of Science Diplomacy. From this meeting, Dr Arruda was invited to be the chair of the session on Science Communication and Diplomacy at TYAN conference. Opportunities for scientific collaboration have also been initiated. One of the examples involves Dr. Patricia Zancan and Dr. Amani Abdelrazag Elfazi from the National University, Khartoum - Sudan. Currently, they have submitted a joint project seeking funding (OWSD PhD fellowship) to allow the scientific visit of a Dr. Amani's doctoral student in the laboratory coordinated by Dr. Patricia.