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Update on the AfLS project

The African Light Source (AfLS) Foundation is engaged in developing the case for an advanced Light Source (adLS) to be designed, constructed and operated on the African continent. The motivation is the enormous benefit to the continent from Science, Technology, Innovation and Development, especially in areas of crucial interest to Africa. There are several areas of progress recently, to note, which are in addition to the baseline activities of human capacity development. In all cases, more details are available at the AfLS website. The AfLS has established its International Advisory Committee. The Interim Chair is Prof Khotso Mokhele, the Chancellor of a SA University, formerly CEO of the SA National Research Foundation, and well versed in large scale research infrastructure advocacy and leadership in a Pan African Context. There are now two MoUs (LAAAMP and SESAME) and many letters of support for the AfLS from African National, Pan African and International organisations and institutions. Another important step in our roadmap is the production of a comprehensive Conceptual Design Report (CDR) for the modern proposed adLS. The editor of the 5 volume CDR is Prof Sekazi Mtingwa. The volumes cover the full spectrum of drivers for this initiative, and also details the science case, as developed from a consultative process within Africa, from its diaspora and from friends and stakeholders in the wider community. The science (including the innovation and business imperatives) then informs the technical specifications of the machine and its instruments. The CDR also includes aspects of finance and governance. We believe that the CDR will concretise the conversation, thus the developing commitment from African Governments and the Pan African diplomatic nature of the project. In fact, the CDR is a most significant milestone to be achieved. Of course, the concept of an AfLS is simultaneously a concept of much advanced human capacity development and also development of local and regional research infrastructure. It also implies a step forward in the capacity of Africa to innovate and have competitive businesses. As such, for example, in a future pandemic, Africa would make a strong contribution in vaccine discovery and production. The AfLS-CDR Town Hall launch event for the Letters of Interest is on Tuesday 11 Oct 2021 from 15:00 – 18:30. There will be the next edition of the AfLS Conference series, AfLS3 2021, from 15-19 November 2021. It is a co-organised event together with the Pan African Conference on crystallography (ePCCr) and also the African Physical Society (AfPS), as well as a cohort of other African scientific organisations. A landmark feature of this conference is several sessions involving African Government Leaders and the African Union Commission, discussing the strategic policy towards the AfLS, in addition to the normal scientific discourse.

Summary

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