

Investment in African researchers

The first 10 Mauritian PhD researchers to be awarded in the 'Her Excellency Mrs Ameenah Gurib-Fakim PhD Scholarship Programme' were announced recently at a ceremony held at the State House, Le Réduit, Mauritius. The PhD Programme is managed by the Planet Earth Institute (PEI), an international NGO and charity working for the scientific independence of Africa, in partnership with the African Academy of Sciences and support from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.



Dr Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of Mauritius and vice chairperson and trustee of Planet Earth Institute and Dr Álvaro Sobrinho, chairman of the Planet Earth Institute (Source: Planet Earth Institute).

The ceremony was hosted by HE Mrs Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of the Republic of Mauritius and Vice-Chairman of the PEI, alongside Dr Álvaro Sobrinho, Chairman of the PEI and its senior Members including the Rt Hon Lord Boateng, Sir Magdi Yacoub and Sir Christopher Edwards.

Launched in 2016, the PhD Scholarship Programme awards PhD research grants in five key areas critical to the sustainable development of Mauritius and the African continent: energy; water and sanitation; agri-business; health; blue skies research. The grants cover the cost of research and academic fees, a student living stipend, travel and accommodation, as well as opportunities to benefit from industrial placements and disseminate work through the [Planet Earth Institute's](#) live and online events.

The Programme is funded by a network of businesses and international institutions, as well as directly by Dr Álvaro Sobrinho, the well-known philanthropist and chairman of the PEI.

The Mauritian researchers now in receipt of the award will have the opportunity to conduct research and spend time at some of the world's leading universities, including the University of Cape Town, the University of Pretoria and the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, and the University of Cambridge and the University of Edinburgh in the UK, amongst others at the pinnacle of international research.

The selection process was run by the Planet Earth Institute with an Academic Board led by eminent scientists Prof Atta Ur Rahman of the University of Karachi, and Prof Berhanu Abegaz, executive director of the African Academy of Sciences.

Dr Gurib-Fakim, congratulated the winners. "The launch of this PhD Programme is a landmark for Mauritius and for Africa, as we seek not just to build a critical mass of scientists on our continent, but also to invest in training the best and brightest. These first 10 Mauritian researchers will have brilliant opportunities to study and network at some of the best international academic institutions, to use cutting edge facilities and equipment.

"Apart from the funding itself, the award winners will further benefit from the valuable opportunities to be part of the PEI's events and activities, promoting and sharing their critical work to a much wider audience. They will become our ambassadors of the future, showcasing the brilliant scientific potential we have in Africa and making contributions to solving the great human challenges ahead of us."

Dr Álvaro Sobrinho, chairman of the Planet Earth Institute, said the programme was about developing quality researchers. "We are heavily investing in some of our brightest minds to give them the opportunities not to be good, but to be great, world leading scientists. Their work and their impact will then go on to inspire and impact our future generations'.

The winners will all be profiled in due course by PIE.

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