CEDAT Successfully hosts 9th regional collaboration conference

The College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology on July 20th – 23rd successfully hosted the annual regional conference which brings together researchers from Uganda, Tanzania, Mozambique and Sweden. The conference which was officially opened by the Minister of Education and Sports, Hon. Jessica Alupo, brought together over 100 delegates in the fields of engineering, design and Art.

The conference under the theme "Research and Innovations forum for sustainable regional development: Over a decade of Swedish Partnership" was also attended by the Vice Chancellor Makerere University Prof. John Ddumba-Ssentamu and the Director of the Directorate of Research and Graduate Training, Prof. Mukadasi Buyinza.

The scope of the conference was broad, covering aspects of engineering, architecture, art, industrial design, surveying and land management. The conference papers focused on the following sub-themes:

- Improving the performance of Infrastructure and Land Management.
- Architecture, Physical Planning, Urbanism, Built Environment Conservation and Efficiency in building.
- Water Resources and Environmental Engineering.
- Engineering Materials and Applications. Harnessing Mineral Resources for Economic and Industrial Development.
- Renewable and Sustainable Energy Systems.
- Power Systems, Mechatronics and Nanotechnology
- Information and Communication Technology; and Geographical Information Systems for Rural Development.
- Visual art, multimedia, and industrial design.
- Innovations and cluster initiatives and related areas.

In her speech the Minister Hon. Jessica Alupo thanked all the researchers for the continued effort in undertaking research geared at developing the country. The pledged continued government support towards science and technology.

"Our President emphasizes the need to industrialize our economy, this is the only way we as a country will grow to compete with the developed world. Your role as scientists is to help the government in this venture by carrying out cutting edge research and proof of concepts," she said.

She challenged the researchers to ensure that the graduates sent out in the field of work have practical skills reflective of the research going on at Makererere.

"I challenge you today to go back draw curricular which opens the minds of our students and gives them an opportunity of create jobs rather than wait to be offered a job," Hon. Alupo said.

She also called on the industry to be supportive of research at the universities.

“I call on the industry in Uganda too, to support research at universities. The government alone cannot fully support research because of the limited resource envelope,” she said.

“Instead of industries paying foreign companies to do their research, they should fund laboratory development at universities so that the researchers carry out the tests needed. This way the university benefits in getting a laboratory equipped but also the industry cuts costs in the long run”.

The Vice Chancellor, Prof. John Ddumba- Ssentamu welcomed researchers from the different countries and called on researchers to increase research output because “the public is now seeking to make universities more accountable for the research funds they consume”

He thanked the government of Sweden, which has continued to support research in Makerere. Sweden is the biggest development partner of the university. Sweden has supported over 200 lecturers to acquire PhDs.

Prof. Buyinza called on universities to partner with the private sector, government, other universities and development partners in order to bridge the funding gap.

He applauded some of the research projects that are contributing to the development of the community. Some of these include the Cluster project which has helped cluster groups in value addition and finding market for products.

The conference received over 100 papers from different researchers. The conference was concluded with an annual general meeting which was characterised by a change of leadership. Prof. Cuthbert Kimambo of USDM handed over chairmanship of the Regional Collaboration to Prof. Henry Alinaitwe.

In appreciation of its Swedish partners, CEDAT awarded some colleagues from the partner institutions in Sweden. These awards were given in appreciation of their outstanding contribution towards the growth and sustainability of the partnership.

Some of the partners who received awards included Professors Dick Urban Vestbro, Hannah Akuffo, Inga Britt Werner, Gerhard Bax and Stefan Jonsson, among others.