

CONCEPT NOTE- PASET GOVERNANCE MEETINGS AND HIGH-LEVEL POLICY DIALOGUE IN NAIROBI, KENYA

24th-25th September 2025

Background

In 2013, the Governments of Rwanda, Ethiopia, and Senegal established the Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET) to support African countries in building a skilled labor force. PASET focuses on the continuum of skills development from foundational education to upper secondary/technical/vocational training, higher education, scientific research, and innovation.

PASET promotes a regional, collaborative approach that directly complements country-level efforts to build targeted skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (ASET) for specific priority sectors, thereby maximizing returns from domestic and foreign investment in these sectors. Since its creation, eight additional governments have joined the initiative, bringing current PASET membership to 11 African governments. PASET also promotes strategic partnerships between African governments, businesses, and partner countries to invest in ASET skills development.

African universities have the mandate to train the next generation of problem solvers and constitute a central part of the Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) ecosystem, housing a significant proportion of the continent's STI skills and capacity. However, they are currently limited in their capacity to address emerging challenges, especially in supporting the needs of a nascent private sector and industry, as well as the requirements of government and other stakeholders. To address this gap, there is a need for more home-grown experts trained by a higher-quality tertiary education system.

Agreed Goals from the PASET Call to action include:

- Training of at least 10,000 new PhD Holders in ASET programs;
- Establishing a SSA-wide regional ASET post graduate scholarship program;
- Doubling ASET program student numbers in at least 10 SSA countries;

PASET's flagship program is the Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (RSIF) (www.rsif-paset.org), which is also the first Pan-African Science fund to "pool" regional investments to support PhD students, post-doctoral scientists, and African universities in establishing high-quality training, research, and innovation environments. The program aims to develop university institutional capacity for the benefit of the entire African region.

PASET Governance Structure

PASET governance consists of a PASET Governing Council (GC), an Executive Board (EB), a Consultative Advisory Group (CAG),

The Governing Council (GC) is responsible for providing strategic direction and thought leadership for PASET, making policy decisions, and serving as the apex body for PASET. It comprises Ministers of Education/Higher Education/TVET from Sub-Saharan African countries that contribute to the RSIF and/or PASET's Regional TVET Centres of Excellence initiative, the World Bank, and key donors. Rwanda, represented by Hon. Joseph NSENGIMANA, Minister of Education of the Government of Rwanda, currently chairs the PASET GC, while Ghana serves as the current Vice Chair.

The Executive Board (EB) serves as PASET's oversight body responsible for all PASET operations. It comprises senior representatives of contributing country governments, a World Bank representative, donors, and the private sector. The board is led by an Executive Director who serves in an individual capacity.

The Consultative Advisory Group (CAG) consists of eminent African scientists/academics and representatives from the private sector, international partner countries, and national agencies whose role is to provide advisory support to PASET. The CAG meets at least once annually in person and virtually as needed, providing technical advice to the EB and GC on an as-needed basis for all PASET initiatives.

Operational Units

Interim PASET Secretariat – The body which oversees the overall work of PASET and coordinates the activities of the three Governing Bodies.

Regional Coordination Unit (RCU) – this is managed by *icipe* and manages the Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (Rsif),

Continental and National Context

African countries are increasingly prioritizing innovative and sustainable approaches to drive economic growth, reduce unemployment, and improve livelihoods. In this context, higher education has emerged as a central pillar in equipping young people with relevant skills to meet the evolving demands of the labour markets. Rwanda, in particular, has demonstrated strong commitment toward this vision through its Second National Strategy for Transformation (NST-2), which supports the realization of both Rwanda's Vision 2050 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). At the continental level, the African Union Commission's (AUC) second 10-Year Implementation Plan (2024–2033) reinforces the role of higher education in accelerating Africa's development. The plan outlines ambitious targets, including the training of 10,000 PhD graduates, 20% of whom should be in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). It also emphasizes the need to reform skills development systems and foster science and innovation as drivers of socio-economic transformation across the continent. TVET is equally important for Africa's development. The African Union has recently published its 'African Continental TVET Strategy 2025-34', which includes a long list of challenges facing TVET and skills development in general in the continent. Although to date PASET has focussed on Doctoral training through its flagship programme Rsif. PASET also has strategies to address TVET which reflect the overall AUC strategies.

Meeting Overview

PASET members will convene in Nairobi in September 2025 for their annual meetings to discuss how to strengthen PASET initiatives and the future direction of PASET. The meetings will include all key governance organs, the PASET Governing Council Meeting, PASET Executive Board Meeting and PASET Consultative Advisory Group Meeting, alongside a High-Level Policy Dialogue on Skills Development. This integrated approach will provide a comprehensive platform for governance decision-making and policy discourse.

Objectives

PASET Governance Meeting Objectives:

The PASET governance meetings will convene to review and approve the work of PASET over the last years and approve the workplan for the coming years. The specific objectives are to:

- Discuss key challenges and lessons learnt during the implementation of PASET activities
- Sign the agreement between PASET and *icipe*
- Review and approve the audit report for the use of World Bank funds to support PASET through *icipe* against PASET Achievements
- Approve the country to host permanent PASET Secretariat
- Sign document confirming updated establishment, commitment and membership of PASET
- Review proposals from Executive Director regarding Governance Structure.

High-Level Policy Dialogue Objectives:

The high-level policy dialogue draws on insights from a multi-country study on doctoral and post-doctoral training conducted in Rwanda, Kenya, and Ethiopia and aims to:

- Deliberate on strategic policy approaches to strengthen higher education and skills development in Rwanda, Kenya and Ethiopia.
- Highlight the contributions and impact of the Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (Rsif) as a sustainable, government-led model that complements national efforts to build science, technology, and innovation capacity across Africa
- Generate actionable policy recommendations to enhance the quality, relevance, and impact of doctoral education, post-doctoral training and research in advancing Rwanda's economic transformation and inclusive innovation, while offering insights applicable to similar contexts across the continent

Expected Outcomes

The combined meetings are expected to:

Governance meeting Outcomes:

- Strengthen PASET's institutional framework and operational efficiency
- Formalize key partnerships and agreements to enhance program sustainability
- Establish clear strategic direction for PASET's future development
- Enhance financial accountability and transparency in program implementation

Policy Dialogue Outcomes:

- Strengthen stakeholder understanding of strategic approaches to higher education and skills development in Rwanda, informed by comparative insights from across Africa
- Promote alignment between higher education policies and national development goals, while elevating the visibility and support for the Regional Scholarship and Innovation Fund (Rsif) as a sustainable, government-led model for building science and innovation capacity
- Generate actionable policy recommendations to enhance the quality and relevance of doctoral education and research in advancing Rwanda's economic transformation and broader regional development goals

Event Details

Dates: September 24-25, 2025

Venue: Tribe Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya

Scope of Participation: PASET Consultative Advisory Group members, PASET Executive Board members, PASET Governing Council members, PASET secretariat, Rsif representatives, invited resource persons, policy makers, academia representatives, and additional local participants as appropriate.

Conclusion

This combined meeting represents a unique opportunity to strengthen PASET's governance while advancing critical policy discussions on skills development in Africa. By bringing together governance and policy dialogue components, the meetings will ensure that strategic decisions are informed by evidence-based research and that policy recommendations are aligned with PASET's institutional priorities and operational realities. The outcomes will contribute to strengthening Africa's capacity in applied sciences, engineering, and technology while fostering sustainable partnerships for continental development.

Meeting Agendas for PASET Governance Meeting

24 September 2025

Event Moderator: Dr. Everlyn Nguku, Head of Capacity Building and Institutional Development, *icipe*

9:00hrs– 13:00hrs: **High level Policy Dialogue**

1. Background and Event Context
 - Dr. Abdou Tenkouano/ Director General, *icipe*
 - Prof Aminata Sall Diallo/ Chair, PASET Executive Board
 - Hon. Mr. Julius Migos Ogamba/ Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Kenya
 - Hon. Joseph NSENGIMANA / Minister of Education, Rwanda and Chair, PASET Governing Council

2. **Keynote presentation:** Findings and Policy Recommendations from the Doctoral and Postdoctoral Training Study for Ethiopia, Kenya and Rwanda.
 3. **Panel Discussion:** How to Improve PhD Training and Postgraduate Impact in African Universities
 4. **Panel Discussion:** How to better align Doctoral and Post Doctoral Training with National Development Strategies
 5. Summary and Next Steps
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Session Chair: Hon. Joseph NSENGIMANA / Minister of Education, Rwanda and Chair, PASET Governing Council

14:00hrs– **Meeting of PASET Governing Council**
17:00hrs:

1. Matters arising from the previous GC Meeting (PASET Secretariat)
 2. Approval of Host Country for permanent PASET Secretariat (Aminata)
 3. Presentation on the current country commitments to support PhD Training under PASET (Julius)
 4. Update on replacement of current Executive Director following her request (GC Chair/GC Members)
 5. Approval of the preparation of PASET Forum (Theme, Date and Venue, Funding) (GC Chair/GC Members)
 6. Presentation regarding PASET Governance by Prof. Aminata Sall Diallo
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Rsif AHU VCs and Coordinators visit to *icipe*

Tour of *icipe* Campus and Lab Facilities

19:00hrs– **Cocktail**
21:00hrs:

1. Welcoming guests Remarks
 2. Dinner served
 3. Vote of Thanks
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25 September 2025

9:00hrs– **Session Chair:** Prof. Aminata Sall Diallo/ Chair, PASET Executive Board
13:00hrs: **Meeting of the PASET Executive Board**

1. Matters arising from the previous EB Meeting
 2. Audit report on World Bank funds for PASET support
 3. Preparation of PASET Forum
 4. Presentation of Rsif Report
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14:00hrs– **Session Chair:** Prof. Goolam Mohamedbhai, Chair of the PASET Consultative
17:00hrs: **Advisory Group**

Meeting of the PASET Consultative Advisory Group

1. Matters Arising from the previous CAG Meeting
2. Presentation of Rsif Report
3. Preparation of PASET Forum
4. Presentation of TVET proposals for PASET Support
5. Fund Raising Strategy – feedback on work of sub-committee
6. AOB

Detailed Agenda for High Level Policy Dialogue

24 September 2025

Event Moderator: Dr. Everlyn Nguku, Head of Integrated Capacity Building at *icipe*

9:00hrs– Opening Remarks

- 9:45hrs:
1. Dr. Abdou Tenkouano/ Director General, *icipe*
 2. Prof. Aminata Sall Diallo/ Chair PASET Executive Board
 3. Hon. Mr. Julius Migos Ogamba, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Kenya
 4. Hon. Joseph NSENGIMANA/ Minister of Education, Rwanda and Chair, PASET Governing Council
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9:45hrs– Presentation

10:00hrs:

Transforming Higher Education for National Growth: Findings from the Rwanda Doctoral and Postdoctoral Training Study by Dr Agnes Lutomiah, Head of Programme, Science Technology and Innovation Knowledge in Society, African Centre for Technology Studies

10:00hrs– Tea/ coffee break (incl. group photo)

10:45hrs– **Moderator:** Prof Emeritus Ratemo Michieka - Chair of the National
11:45hrs: **Research Fund Board of Trustees, Kenya**

Panel Discussion: How to Improve PhD Training and Postgraduate Impact in African Universities

Panelists:

1. Dr. Edward Kadozi/ Director General for Higher Education Council (HEC), Rwanda
 2. Dr. Serawit Handiso Melkato/ CEO Research and Community Engagement Affairs, Ministry of Education, Ethiopia
 3. Prof. Mwemezi J. Rwiza / Dean School of Materials, Energy, Water, and Environmental Sciences (MEWES), Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology, Tanzania
 4. Prof. Azikiwe Peter Onwualu/ President, African University of Science and Technology, Nigeria
 5. Prof. Caroline Thoruwa/ Deputy Vice Chancellor Research, Innovation and Outreach, Kenyatta University, Kenya
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11:45hrs– **Moderator:** Dr. Noël Gahamanyi/ Division Manager National Reference
12:45hrs: **Laboratory, Rwanda Biomedical Centre (PASET-Rsif Alumni)**

Panel Discussion: How to better align Doctoral and Post Doctoral Training with National Development Strategies

Panelists:

1. Prof. El Hadji Bamba/ Director General, Institut International d'Ingenierie de l'Eau et de l'Environnement (2iE), Burkina Faso
2. Prof. Ignace Gatere / Principal of the College of Science and Technology, University of Rwanda
3. Dr. Bobe Bedadi/ Deputy Centre Leader, ACE Climate SABC, Haramaya University, Ethiopia
4. Dr. Richard Edema/ Director, Makerere University Regional Centre for Crop Improvement, Makerere University, Uganda

12:45hrs– **Summary and Next Steps:**
12:55hrs: Dr Julius Ecuru/ Head of Policy and Enabling Environment & Rsif RCUManager,
icipe

12:45hrs– **Closing Remarks:**
13:00hrs: Hon. Joseph NSENGIMANA/ Minister of Education, Rwanda and Chair of PASET
Governing Council

13:00hrs: Lunch
