

Comments from participants in the first Africa-Europe Conference on Research Excellence facilitated by Stellenbosch University from 30 September to 2 October 2024

- **Dr Therina Theron, Senior Director: Research and Innovation at SU**

“It was truly inspirational during the event to witness the positive vibe and excitement in the air around the Africa-Europe CoRE initiative. I believe that the Africa-Europe CoRE has great potential to forge sustainable and equitable transnational research partnerships that will co-create new knowledge, with a great potential to win international research grants and have a positive impact on some of society’s most complex challenges. We look forward to continuing to support them in this quest!”

- **Prof Kåre Moen, University of Oslo, Sweden**

“I’m part of the cluster on health, gender and sexualities. This conference has been valuable on so many levels. It’s very inspiring in the sense that we are 21 different clusters gathered here, and all have the same idea of strengthening collaboration between Africa and Europe. Within our cluster, we have been able to discuss shared challenges, future projects and making links to other clusters and learning from others as well.”

- **Dr Fancis Mujjuni, School of Engineering, Makerere University, Uganda**

“Beyond Stellenbosch University’s generosity and the good food at the conference, the big take-away for me is that we’re not talking about potential, we’re actualising our efforts. The impactful collaborations will translate into improved livelihoods and commercialisation of some of the research outputs, but in the immediate sense we’re going to educate the African girl child. We’re talking about up to 8 000 PhDs over the next ten years, we’re talking about increased funding for our research and so much more to look forward to. My time here has been special. I’ve worked and lived in Europe, but I would say Stellenbosch is up there with the very best in terms of infrastructure, the town and the amazing people.”

- **Prof Neil Koorbanally, Dean of Research, University of KwaZulu-Natal**

“It’s a great platform to get together researchers from Europe and Africa and especially, to train PhD students to benefit the next generation of scientists. I hope that through this platform we will achieve success that will facilitate cooperation between the two continents to reduce inequality. In my capacity as the Dean of Research from University of KwaZulu-Natal, I’m hoping to get as many researchers as possible involved in the collaborative projects between ARUA and The Guild.”

- **Prof Guy Midgley, Director of the School for Climate Studies at SU**

“This conference is a sign of a new era in north-south collaboration between Africa and Europe. In the space of innovation science, research and capacity development, the PhD programmes are almost certainly going to be a complete game changer for Africa. I’m very excited by the massive impetus that is coming for multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research. I think we’re going to build strong and lasting relationships between Stellenbosch and other universities in South Africa and Africa and in Europe. And the unique combination of social scientists and physical and economic science is an opportunity for some novel research. We’re going to go from strength to strength. We’re waiting for significant funding, and I look forward to a golden period of developing strong interactions and very good students.”

- **Prof Cristina Trois, Director of the Centre for Renewable and Sustainable Energy Studies at SU**

“It was a very engaging conference. We were exposed to a powerhouse of policymakers this morning, but they were also exposed to a powerhouse of academic expertise here. It’s very clear that African science is on a par with international science. This initiative is our opportunity to make sure that African science not only impacts locally, but that it is recognised globally.”

- **Sean Rowlands, Senior Policy Officer of The Guild**

“I’ve been working for The Guild for a year now and a significant focus of my work is supporting the Africa-Europe CoRE initiative. Some people I’ve met before, some people I hadn’t, but to be here all together and to see everybody else meeting each other and exchanging ideas is fantastic. It’s simply wonderful to see something grow from an idea that we realised would require very hard work turn into something living and working with promise of a very bright future.”

- **Dr Chisara Ogbogbo, University of Ghana**

“The three days have been very fruitful and rewarding. We’ve been networking and making progress with work on artificial intelligence and computational thinking. I want to say a big thank you to the Stellenbosch University for giving us this platform and bringing us together to brainstorm and collaborate. Ultimately, we want to make an impact, and we want to effect change in Africa and Europe. It’s a great opportunity to build together and advance research. I’m grateful for Stellenbosch University’s support for research in Africa. The University has been a wonderful host – we’ve had amazing dinners and wine, and it was lovely to interact with your rector.”