

Paper Number: 3287

Moving Africa forward : The African women geoscientists

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Despite its richness in natural resources, Africa, the second largest continent, is facing major challenges including, climate change, disaster risk, water scarcity, food crisis, energy shortage, environmental and health related problems, among others, that are affecting its human and socio-economical development. The African Association of Women in Geosciences (AAWG), was created in 1995 in Nairobi (Kenya), to help improving this situation by sharing and exchanging information on experiences, best practices, new developments and trends in technologies and methodologies in various areas of geosciences. The AAWG is promoting the role that women can play in Geosciences for African society and also promoting African women through geosciences.

Building on this, the AAWG hold its first workshop in 2000 in Tanzania for the purpose of exchanging ideas, discussing results and encouraging women to present their work and activities at geoscientific conferences. Consequently, the biannual colloquium of the AAWG was born. Since then, the association has organized seven biannual conferences in various African countries: South Africa, Uganda, Morocco, Egypt, Cote d'Ivoire, Cameroon and Namibia. Its eighth conference entitled "Building bridges between Earth Scientists worldwide: a way for promoting peace and strengthening integration" **will be held in Romania on October 1-7, 2016**. In addition to the scientific sessions, numerous activities are held during AAWG conferences such as roundtables, peace march, peace appeal, in order to promote sustainable peace and its close relationship with scientific progress and sustainable development on the African continent. To build the capacity of women geoscientists, our conferences are chaired by women and are accompanied by short courses and field trips. To encourage women geoscientists to publish their scientific works, AAWG is trying, when it is possible, to publish special publication volumes. AAWG has also co-organised numerous workshops, roundtables and meetings on and outside the African continent.

Based on our conviction that promoting geoheritage in Africa could play a crucial role in geoconservation and have more impact on local socio-economical and human development especially in areas with

higher poverty levels, AAWG is promoting geoheritage for society by organizing international conferences focused on geoheritage for the first time on the African continent, numerous short courses, workshops and field trips, in collaboration with its affiliate, the African Geoparks Network (AGN), and other stakeholders.

To reach their objectives, AAWG and AGN proclaimed in 2013, the **20th of March of each year**, as a “*Day for Earth Sciences in Africa and the Middle East*”. This initiative which is supported by numerous national and international organisations and institutions, aims to promote Earth Sciences for Society and to increase the awareness on the role that Earth Scientists can play to help to build a peaceful, healthier and wealthier continent. In 2016, the day will be celebrated under the theme "Geoethics, Geoheritage, Georesources & Geoenvironment".

