



RÉPUBLIQUE DU SÉNÉGAL  
Un Peuple - Un But - Une Foi



Ministry of Scientific Research

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**Fifth Ordinary Session  
of the World Commission on the Ethics  
of Scientific Knowledge and  
Technology (COMEST) on the Ethics  
of Science in Africa**

Hôtel Le Méridien Président, Dakar, Sénégal, 6-9 Décembre 2006

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**DAKAR DECLARATION**

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### **Fifth Ordinary Session of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) on the Ethics of Science in Africa**

**Adopted on 9 December 2006  
Dakar, Republic of Senegal**

#### **PREAMBULE,**

**WE**, Ministers of Scientific Research and Technology of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), meeting at the Fifth Ordinary Session of the World Commission on the Ethics of Scientific Knowledge and Technology (COMEST) from 6 to 9 December 2006 in Dakar, Senegal;

**Guided** by the Constitution of UNESCO which mandates the organization to promote “the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind” and to play a leading role in the area of ethics of science and technology;

**Guided** by the vision of African Heads of State who have adopted science and technology as fundamental paths for sustainable development;

**Aware** that, to translate this vision into reality, we need to bridge the scientific and technological divide between the developed countries and Africa;

**Considering** that Africa lags behind in the fundamental area of science and technology, as well as the risk this entails of its marginalization in decision-making at the global level;

**Considering** the complexity of issues related to science and technology and their applications, which requires a multidisciplinary and pluralistic approach;

**Noting** the acceleration of the process of globalization and considering that African societies are increasingly influenced by scientific progress and technological innovations;

**Realising** that African countries accord little attention to the ethical implications of science and technology and that ethical frameworks for scientific and technological research practices remain inadequate on the continent;

**Considering** the importance that UNESCO and the scientific community attribute to international instruments, in particular the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights adopted in 1997 and the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights adopted in 2005;

**Taking note** of the Declaration on Science and the Use of Scientific Knowledge resulting from the World Conference on Science, co-organised by UNESCO and the International Council of Scientific Unions at the University of Budapest in June 1999, which requested that particular attention be given to codes and regulations of scientific professions;

**Considering** the importance of training and awareness building on issues of science and technology;

**Considering** the recommendations of COMEST related to ethics of environment, the development and use of new technologies and the teaching of ethics;

**Taking note** of the results of discussions during the Fifth Session of COMEST on the social responsibility of young African researchers, ethics of science, codes of conduct, teaching of ethics of science and technology, ethics of environment including the issue of toxic waste, relations between biosecurity, biodiversity and genetically modified organisms;

**Aware** of the need for effective, responsible and transparent interaction between scientists, policy makers and civil society to address numerous challenges, in particular the management of toxic waste, biosecurity problems and non-compliance with norms for clinical tests,

## **BY THIS DECLARATION,**

### **WE UNDERTAKE:**

1. to reinforce our commitment to scientific and technological research for our societies by increased support to institutions, research programmes, and researchers;
2. to encourage exchanges, cooperation and building of synergies among our countries in the field of scientific research and technology both in the public and private sectors;
3. to support and encourage young researchers by providing them opportunities for high level training and for professional integration into the scientific community;
4. to pursue vigorous efforts to assure women a place in the scientific community;
5. to promote South-South and joint North-South cooperation by facilitating the mobility of scientists, the pursuit of common programmes, the networking among centres of excellence, and the mobilization of necessary funds;
6. to progressively put into place programmes for training and teaching of ethics in all academic curricula and professional training programmes, and also for researchers and networks of governmental and non-governmental institutions;
7. to create, support, and provide encouragement to committees on ethics of science and bioethics in our countries;

8. to set up a regional body responsible for :
  - ensuring the application of national and international texts aimed at the protection of human beings, societies, and the environment
  - seeing to it that codes of conducts are elaborated and enforced
  - encouraging the responsible involvement of women and young people in scientific and technological research
  - analysing the risks and benefits of research in order to ensure more sharing of research results
  - considering the possibility of preparing normative texts following international consultative processes (eg model laws like the one on biosafety)
9. to encourage cooperation between Ministries concerned by questions of ethics of science and technology;
10. to encourage and support meetings and forums held at the regional and sub-regional levels to promote exchanges on questions of ethics;
11. to work for strengthened collaboration in the field of ethics, bioethics and life sciences between universities, professional associations, research institutes and African ethics committees, and with regional and international partner institutions;

**In the light of these commitments,**

**We, Ministers of Scientific Research and Technology:**

Recommend that our States and Governments recognize the growing importance of the social and ethical implications of scientific and technological research, and translate this into our economic and social development policies.

Call on the Government of the Republic of Senegal to submit this Declaration to:

- The Executive Secretary of ECOWAS;
- The Authorities concerned in the African Union for review during the Eighth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the African Union in January 2007 on the theme “Science, Technology and Research for Development in Africa”;
- The Director General of UNESCO.

Thank UNESCO for organizing the Fifth Ordinary Session of COMEST in Africa,

Call on UNESCO to develop a Regional Programme in collaboration with the ECOWAS Executive Secretary in order to support ECOWAS Ministers in implementing this Declaration.

**WE express** our deep gratitude to His Excellency Abdoulaye Wade, President of the Republic of Senegal as well as the people of Senegal for their warm, convivial, and friendly welcome and for the excellent organisation of this first meeting of COMEST on African soil, in Dakar.

