Successful Appearance of BEBUC on the Africa Festival

June 5, 2012

For the first time the BEBUC Scholarship System has presented itself by a booth on the International Africa Festival in Würzburg. BEBUC, which has originated from the University of Würzburg (UNIWÜ), supports up-and-coming young scientists in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In the course of the Festival as many as 25 new members were gained for the Förderverein Uni Kinshasa (NGO for the support of the University of Kinshasa, fUNIKIN), which organizes the scholarship system.

"Particularly stimulating at the Africa Festival was the immediate interaction with experts and amateurs "", says Gerhard Bringmann, professor of chemistry at the University of Würzburg and one of the initiators of BEBUC. The conversations did not only deal with the sustainability of the scholarship system and its model character for other countries, but also on private and public aid for Africa in general. Journalists also came to the BEBUC booth and had interviews for radio and press there.

The visitors were particularly enthusiastic about the commitment and radiance of the three first African BEBUC students who have been in Würzburg since the beginning of April. They reported about their life in the Congo and in Germany, about the chances and perspectives offered to them through the scholarship system, and about their future plans.

During the Africa Festival the BEBUC team created many new contacts, among others with the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ; Society for International Cooperation), of the Afrikahilfe Franken (Help Africa Franconia), and with Mbonda Lokito Kongo/Kinshasa Kinderhilfe (Children's Aid). This NGO from Würzburg has built a primary school in one of the poorest parts of Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Objectives of the Excellence Scholarship System BEBUC

The scholarship system BEBUC aims at breaking the vicious circle of over-aging, sinking quality, and hopelessness at Congolese universities. It offers a chance for up-and-coming young scientists, to study rapidly and in depth, first in the Congo and then abroad. It shall then facilitate for the young scientists to return to the Congo and to acquire a professorship. "In its combination of internationality, excellence, private sponsorships, and individual experts' advice, from high-school to the professorship, BEBUC is worldwide unique", emphasizes Bringmann.

Stormy Development Presented

At the booth on the Africa Festival, the tremendous development of the scholarship system was presented. In 2008, just four bachelor
scholars were sponsored, two each from chemistry and pharmacy, all from the UNIKIN, the partner university of the UNIWÜ. Today the system already supports 64 scholars from all subjects of the UNIKIN and from all phases of higher education, that is bachelor, master, PhD, and re-entry scholars. And besides the University of Kinshasa meanwhile seven further partner universities in the Congolese cities of Mbanza Ngungu, Kikwit, Bukavu, Goma, and Butembo are involved. Furthermore there are now BEBUC scholars in three high-schools in Kinshasa, Bukavu, and Butembo.

The Förderverein (NGO) Organizes the Scholarship System

The scholarships are organized by the NGO fUNIKIN, and financed from members' fees and private donations, but, in particular, from personal sponsorships, one of the 'trade marks' of the scholarship system. Further substantial funds come from the German foundation Else-Kröner-Fresenius-Stiftung.

These funds do not only permit financing the scholarships, but are also used for building up infrastructure in the Congo (with tutors, a secretary, a manager, a seminar room, and computational equipment) and in Europe (a secretary and a manager). Likewise financed from this money are interdisciplinary seminar programs, excursions, language courses, and other activities.

Directory Board Unanimously Re-elected

The members' assembly of the NGO took place the day before the start of the Africa Festival. During the meeting, the Directory Board was unanimously re-elected for three further years. The president is Gerhard Bringmann, his deputy is Virima Mudogo, professor at the UNIKIN and alumnus of the University of Würzburg. Further members of the Directory Board are: Axel Haase (the previous president of UNIWÜ) as the secretary, Christine Wolf as the treasurer, Karine Ndjoko Ioset as the program deputy, Hypolite Muhindo Mavoko as the deputy for public-relations work, and Brigitte Burrichter as an assessor.

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