

Ugandan scientist to join Einstein fellows

By John Odyek

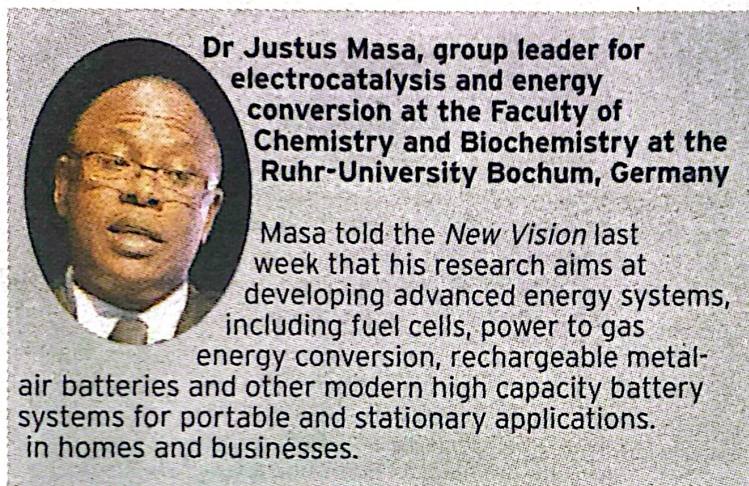
The next Einstein Forum has selected Dr Justus Masa for a prestigious fellowship.

Masa is currently the group leader for electrocatalysis and energy conversion at the Faculty of Chemistry and Biochemistry at the Ruhr-University Bochum in Germany. He is affiliated to Kyambogo University, where he gives lectures at the department of chemistry every semester.

He is interested in coupling solar energy harvesting with advanced electrochemical energy storage and conversion systems to improve the overall efficiency of the energy tapped from the sun, for mini-grid and large grid-scale energy applications.

The forum, inspired by Albert Einstein, a German mathematician and physicist, brings together Africa's best scientists.

The South African-based African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) initiative, in partnership with Robert Bosch Stiftung, selected the 2017-2019 Fellows Class



made up of 16 scientists.

"We strongly believe their discoveries and initiatives, current and future, will solve global challenges in health, energy, climate change, education, agriculture among others," Thierry Zomahoun, the chairperson of NEF and president of AIMS, said.

The scientists will present their research at the second NEF Global Gathering of leading scientists, journalists, industries and business people from around the world in Kigali, Rwanda in March next year. President Paul Kagame

is expected to preside over the function, which will be attended by Uganda's representatives from the government, academia, media and civil society.

About Masa

He is a member of the technical working group on Mineral Value Addition, under the Presidential Investors Round Table (PIRT) initiative, where he serves as the head of the salt cluster. He is expected to lead a comprehensive baseline study of the industrial prospects of the salt deposits at Lake Katwe,

Kasese district. The Government has promised \$2m (sh7.2b) for the study required to build a database of information necessary to attract investors to add value to the salt.

Elly Karuhanga, the president of the Uganda Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said it was very exciting for a Ugandan to be selected among the world's top scientists. Karuhanga said, with funding provided for research on Lake Katwe, value addition can be made to the salt deposits which are being underused. "Value addition in minerals can transform Uganda quickly," Karuhanga said.

Amelia Kyambadde, the minister for trade and industry, said Uganda faces the challenge of lack of skills to support the development of value addition. "We expect Masa to undertake the feasibility study of Lake Katwe salt, under the Uganda Development Corporation and the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology. We expect to promote value addition for the Katwe Salt Project as recommended by the PIRT meeting," Kyambadde said.