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Press Release

UM6P, UNESCO and OCP Foundation Operationalize a Triangular Platform for African-Centered Development Agendas

Benguerir, July 18, 2025 -- University Mohammed VI Polytechnic, the OCP Foundation and UNESCO are entering a new operational cycle of their collaboration, extending from 2025 to 2027, with a budgetary commitment of $6 million. Signed by Mostapha Terrab, Chairman of OCP Group and Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO; the agreement marks a new stage in a collaboration anchored in long-term vision and operational pragmatism.

Built on a joint implementation mechanism between UM6P and UNESCO, supported by the OCP Foundation, the initiative reflects a shared objective to develop programs where education, science, technology, and cultural knowledge function as interdependent levers of sustainable development on the African continent.

Since 2017, the three institutions have engaged in collaborative efforts informed by a converging set of values, including long-term investment in knowledge systems, the role of higher education, the preservation of cultural resources, and the relevance of context-sensitive innovation. Rather than imposing a uniform model, the collaboration advances a modular architecture of cooperation, composed of five distinct but mutually reinforcing workstreams. Each of these is framed through a separate agreement, allowing for differentiated timelines, tools, and governance models depending on the thematic area.

« We consider this partnership a catalyst — a true driver of impact and innovation serving the African continent. By joining our efforts around key pillars such as artificial intelligence — which must be regarded as a powerful lever for heritage enhancement, innovation, and empowerment — as well as sustainable development, history, culture, and higher education, we are confident in our ability to support and accelerate the profound transformations underway across the continent, » said **Mostapha Terrab**, Chairman of OCP Group.

« Africa is at the heart of UNESCO's mission and priorities. We are strengthening our partnership with the OCP Foundation and the University Mohammed VI Polytechnic for the coming years by investing in knowledge, communities and territories. We are doing so through education, heritage and the environment – essential pillars of Africa's future, » said **Audrey Azoulay**, Director-General of UNESCO

In the field of artificial intelligence, the collaboration prioritizes operationalizing the **Rabat African Consensus on AI**. This includes the design of regionally adapted training modules, the development of applied research streams, and the exploratory deployment of generative AI technologies in selected public service domains. The underlying logic is to test pathways through which African countries may appropriate AI technologies not simply as users but as institutional actors with the ability to define the problem spaces, ethical thresholds, and infrastructural needs that are specific to their administrative realities.

Within higher education, the program focuses on enabling cross-border academic mobility, research co-production, and the development of academic ecosystems less reliant on imported models of excellence. Scholarship schemes, mobility programs, and joint supervision of research projects will be implemented through **Campus Africa**, a platform designed by UNESCO to encourage horizontal collaboration among African universities. The emphasis is on the circulation of talent, knowledge, and pedagogical practices, with a view to building institutional capacities that are regionally embedded and internationally connected.

The inclusion of the UNESCO-led **General History of Africa (GHA)** marks an effort to engage with historical knowledge as an operational resource in curriculum reform. The project involves supporting African universities in integrating GHA into their academic offerings through the provision of multilingual teaching materials, the training of faculty, and the development of monitoring tools to assess implementation.

The **Maou'root initiative** on cultural heritage focuses on building a pan-African professional network in the field of heritage conservation. It departs from siloed approaches by advocating for community-based and interdisciplinary models that address both tangible and intangible cultural assets. Through targeted training, localized diagnostic tools, and inter-institutional exchanges, the program aims to develop capacities for heritage governance that are technically rigorous while remaining socially embedded.

On environmental matters, the ecosystem restoration component adopts a pilot-based methodology. Selected protected areas in Africa will serve as test sites for integrated restoration projects that link biodiversity conservation with climate resilience and economic revitalization. The project seeks to establish whether ecological outcomes can be pursued in tandem with income generation and livelihood diversification for local populations. This work will inform the development of scalable models that take into account the interdependencies between natural systems, economic pressures, and institutional mandates.

This renewed phase reflects a common position among the three institutions: that development outcomes in Africa are less a function of discrete projects than of the architecture that links knowledge production, institutional design, and operational feasibility.