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Launch of the Kenyan Australian Alumni Association

The Kenyan Australian Alumni Association was launched on Tuesday night and already has over 300 prospective members.

The potential membership is much larger. Kenya is Australia's biggest source of students on mainland Africa, with nearly 1,800 currently in Australia and many thousands having studied there over recent decades. And nearly 200 Kenyans have been recipients of Australia Awards over the last three years, with more in the pipeline

Australia Awards alumni have joined with privately funded scholars to form the Kenyan Australian Alumni Association (KAAA) to provide a forum for networking and sharing ideas. The KAAA will also promote Australian scholarships and support development efforts in Kenya.

Speaking at the launch, Australian High Commissioner to Kenya, HE Geoff Tooth, said Africa's future held immense promise and this was reflected by continuing interest and growth in trade and investment, particularly in the mining and education sectors.

"I am very excited about the launch of the Alumni Association because Kenyan students who studied in Australia are a vital bridge in the relationship between our two countries," he said. "The Association will give them a forum to network, do business and maintain their links with Australia."

"Our alumni have the skills, connections and drive to make a significant contribution to development in Kenya and Africa and hopefully the Association can play an important role in this."

Kenya has participated in the Australian Government scholarship program since the late 1980s, with the country receiving 188 scholarships and fellowships between 2011 and 2013.

Ms Njoki Kahiga, Acting Principal Secretary Director in the Kenyan Ministry of State for Public Service, represented the Kenyan government at the event.

The Association's objectives include creating a network of people to advise Australian and Kenyan institutions on social, economic, cultural and education issues. It also aims to assist potential Australia Awards recipients with information on the scholarships.

Kenya has now joined the ranks of other Australian Alumni Associations recently established in Mozambique, Uganda and Zambia.

Australia Awards offers long-term scholarships as well as short-term fellowships. It promotes equal participation by both women and men. The initiative also aims to ensure that people with disability are given a fair and equal opportunity to compete for and obtain scholarships. The Australian Government has put mechanisms in place to support applicants and awardees requiring specific assistance.

More information on Australia Awards is available at <http://www.adsafrica.com.au>

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