Importance of Cassava in the World
Cassava is currently the fourth most important food crop in the world, after maize, wheat and rice. Cassava is grown over 24 million hectares in 105 countries in the world, for a total production of 268 million tons in 2014. The global production is by enlarge done by an estimated 6 million very small holders, in the world. However, the average yield of 11 t/Ha is way below the potential of the crop and a lot of efforts have to be deployed to raise the yield globally, but particularly in Africa. Since 1998, cassava is the crop increasing most in relative production in the world, pulled by the industry in south east Asia and by food in Africa.

History of the GCP21 Conferences
GCP21 – Global Cassava Partnership for the 21st Century – is a non-for-profit organization, headquartered in CIAT, Colombia, aiming at spreading all information about cassava through its website, international conferences, strategic meetings and other publications. GCP21 is organizing its IVth International Cassava Conference in Cotonou, Benin in June 2018. The first one was in Ghent, Belgium in 2008, the second one in Kampala, Uganda in 2012, and the third one in Nanning, China in 2016.

Content of the Conference
The Conference is a scientific and technical conference covering all aspects and fields from the cassava genomics to the cassava food and feed products, through production, transformation and use. The concept is to put in close correlation research and development, to improve the rate of adoption of new cassava varieties and technologies and favor technical and human developments of all types that could benefit cassava and small farmers all over the world.

Theme of the Conference
The theme for the IVth GCP21 International Cassava Conference is: Cassava Transformation in Africa. This theme has been chosen because of the launch of the African Development Bank program entitled: Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation – TAAT. It will be an excellent opportunity to review all aspects of the cassava transformation in Africa: new varieties, new technologies, new processes of transformation, new food and feed products, new uses of cassava waste... It will also be the opportunity to review the status of scientific and technologies advances on cassava all over the world.

Format of the Conference
The Conference will expand over 5 days. The first day will be dedicated to plenary presentations from top speakers, illustrating the different aspects of the theme of the conference. The last day will be dedicated to state of the art presentations on biological, molecular and genomic advances made on cassava for the last 3 years. The day 2, 3 and 4 will be filled with 21 parallel sessions covering all the aspects of cassava R&D. These sessions will have oral and posters presentations. Every day, at lunch time, there will be panel discussions, interviews and Q&A on the media stage in the center of the conference venue. The conference will also host dedicated workshops organized by invited attendees.

Sponsors of the Conference
The Conference will be sponsored by several major institutions; BMGF, IITA, CIAT, RTB, AfDB, CORAF, INRAB - Institut National Agronomique du Benin, and FAS-UAC -
Faculté des Sciences Agronomiques de l’Université Abomey-Calavi. A larger number of organizations will join the Conference, sponsoring special events, travel grants, workshops, satellite meetings, as well as private companies from the different parts of the globe that will have the possibility to show case their products at exhibit booths.

**Golden Cassava Award**
During the Conference, the organizers will nominate two prestigious cassava scientists or developers, for the **Golden Cassava Award**. These are individuals who contributed in a very significant manner to the knowledge, research, development, funding, production or transformation of cassava in the world. The winners will be honored in a very unique and festive ceremony on the opening day.

**Travel Grant Program**
For each conference, GCP21 is organizing a Travel Grant Program, targeting young participants in all fields, to have a chance to participate to this major cassava event. A call for sponsors is organized to fund partial or full fellowships. The fellowships can be conference generic or branded to the name of the sponsors.

**Expected Attendees**
The organizers expect 500 attendees, or more, originating from the 105 cassava producing countries as well as from a number of developed countries. These attendees belong to all sorts of categories such as: scientists, professors, technicians, developers, journalists, administrators, donors, bankers, private companies representatives and more. The concept is to create a melting pot of people, subjects and discussions around the cassava crop, to stimulate exchange of information, promote collaborations, generate new ideas, new projects...

**Satellite Meetings**
Before and after the Conference, a number of projects, donor agencies, private companies, associations, NGOs... are offered to organize a private or public satellite meeting of their own interest on cassava. The content and topic, as well as the audience, are completely open to the organizers of these satellite meetings, who will support the cost of these satellites.

**Communication Team**
A communication team is constituted among the major organizers of the Conference and lead by one organization, to ensure a very good spread of the information and a large network of communication for the different elements of the Conference, such as public relation, sponsoring packages, panel discussions, media relations and more.

**Expected Outcomes of the Conference**
The first most important outcome of the Conference is the exchange of information between all participants. It is the most efficient way to accelerate R&D on cassava. All plenary presentations, all presentations and all the posters will be posted on the GCP21 website, shortly after the Conference, so that people who were not able to attend the Conference will have direct access to the information. There will also be a number of public reports, interviews, and journal articles that will be published by the Conference communication team and the media people present at the Conference.

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Information about the conference:
http://www.gcp21.org/beninconference/