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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Workshop on Establishment of a Continental Accreditation Agency for Higher Education in Africa

10 – 11 April 2013, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

WORKSHOP COMMUNIQUÉ

Communiqué

We, the participants at the Workshop on Establishment of a Continental Accreditation Agency for Higher Education in Africa held at the African Union New Compound Conference Complex, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia from 10 - 11 April, 2013 approve and adopt the following Communiqué:

Acknowledging

- i. The importance of higher education contributions to African development.
- ii. The commitment of the African Union towards the harmonisation of higher education in Africa through its Plan of Action for the Second Decade of Education in Africa.
- iii. That the national and regional regulatory bodies are essential to successful continental quality assurance harmonisation in Africa.
- iv. The need for framework of excellence to be developed in the continent.
- v. The importance of reinforcing cooperation between quality assurance agencies to promote creation of a Continental Accreditation Agency and need for the agency to coordinate accreditation activities that will facilitate the mobility of staff, students and labour across Africa.
- vi. The efforts geared by the African Union Commission towards implementing African Quality Rating Mechanism.
- vii. The need for stronger ties and cooperation should be forged between quality assurance agencies for efficient and effective quality assurance systems in Africa.

- viii. The decision of AU Executive Council for establishing a Continental Accreditation Agency is imperative following the increased drive towards regional integration, harmonization of higher education and strengthened intra-African collaboration.
- ix. The need to actualize the visions of the Arusha convention

Hereby agree to

- i. Promote the establishment of a continental organ(s) for quality assurance and accreditation
- ii. Facilitate information exchange and experience sharing on quality assurance mechanisms, rating, ranking and accreditation practices in Africa
- iii. Reinforce cooperation between national and regional QA/accreditation agencies and promote the establishment of an African Quality Assurance Framework.

Recommend:

A. The creation of an African Continental Accreditation Council / Agency

- i. The establishment of continental body to coordinate accreditation of higher education institutions in regions and nations of Africa (Suggestion: “***African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council for Higher Education (AQAACHE)***”).
- ii. The continental Accreditation agency (AQAACHE) should have the political and legal backing of the African countries.

- iii. The continental Accreditation agency (AQAACHE) would be a technical body that will be answerable to Conference of Ministers of the African Union (COMEDAF).
- iv. The functions of the continental Accreditation agency should be to:
 - Enhance quality in all private, state and federal higher institutions including open and distance universities in the various countries in Africa.
 - Accredite national and other regulatory agencies.
 - Facilitate the establishment of new national regulatory agencies where they do not exist.
 - Set modalities of comparability of degrees and certificates in different regions and nations in line with the Arusha Convention.
 - Harmonize minimum standards and qualification frameworks set up regionally and nationally.
 - Set up policy guidelines for capacity building for quality assurance and accreditation.
 - Advance good accreditation practices for recognized centres of excellence in Africa, including the Pan African University.
 - Promote partnership and collaboration among quality assurance and accreditation bodies in Africa.
 - Promote quality assurance culture in higher education in Africa.
 - Facilitate research into QA in Africa and related issues
- v. The following strategies were identified for the take off of the continental accreditation agency / council:
 - The formal endorsement of COMEDAF
 - The establishment of formal secretariat
 - Take off funds should be provided by the African Union and funding sustainability strategies should be formulated.

- The continental accreditation agency should take over all the responsibilities of AfriQAN, when fully operational.
 - The continental accreditation agency/ council should among other things be involved with the following:
 - Organization of consultative meetings
 - Organization of capacity building workshops in quality assurance and accreditation
 - Facilitating special studies and research on quality assurance and accreditation
- vi. Pan Africa University should be accredited by relevant accreditation agencies – professional bodies, and Institutional, national, regional and continental accreditation agencies.
- vii. Relevant higher education stakeholders such as the Association of African Universities, the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN), CAMES, IUCEA, etc should be coopted by the African Union Commission in the implementation and organization of the continental accreditation and quality assurance agency / council.

B: Continental Quality Assurance Framework

- i. The Setting up of a continental quality assurance framework to guide the operations and activities of QA agencies in African countries.
- ii. The establishment of quality and regulatory agencies in countries that do not have them.
- iii. The continental quality assurance framework should adopt some strategies for the harmonization of the operations and minimum benchmarks set up by the various regional and national regulatory agencies.
- iv. Develop a database of peer reviewers in the continent for accreditation, QA and audit.

- v. The continental quality assurance framework should incorporate African Credit Transfer System to facilitate mobility of staff, students and labour across the continent.
- vi. The quality assurance framework should make use of the existing institutions and instruments including AfriQAN, AAU, harmonization initiative using Tuning Approach, HEMIS, Regional QA bodies, CAMES, HEQMISA, IUCEA, COMEDAF, national QA agencies and other relevant bodies.
- vii. A technical committee of experts should be set up to develop the continental quality assurance framework.

C General

- i. The African higher education community should take ownership of the continental initiatives , including :
 - (a) *African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Council for Higher Education (AQAACHE)*”.
 - (b) *African Quality Assurance Framework*
 - (c) African Quality Rating Mechanism for institutional quality improvements.
- ii. Key stakeholders should continue to provide information on quality assurance issues at national, regional and continental levels.