

Communiqué

Preamble

We, representatives of the UNESCO African States and of the Holy See (hereinafter referred to as "Member States") gathered in Paris (France) on 16-17 July 2015 at the invitation of the Director-General of UNESCO and the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to prepare the implementation of the Revised Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Certificates, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States (referred to as the 2014 Addis Convention),

1. Reaffirming our commitment to facilitating mobility as a main strategy towards access to higher education to the greatest number of people, according to their abilities and irrespective of their social status, age, gender, nationality or community,
 2. Committed to the Second Decade of Education for Africa (2006-2015) Plan of Action which refers to higher education as one of the seven areas of focus, and subsequent education strategy for Africa (2016-2025),
 3. Supportive of the Incheon (Republic of Korea) Declaration of May 2015, which emphasises the right to inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all, including higher education,
 4. Convinced that a framework for harmonization and quality improvement is essential in revitalizing higher education in Africa,
 5. Recognizing the need for putting in place effective quality assurance, qualifications fraud prevention and accreditation mechanisms at the institutional, national, regional and continental levels,
 6. Noting the need to integrate and contextualize the ongoing process into the regional initiatives,
 7. Taking into account the current global trends in higher education and in particular those of the African region, such as expansion of higher education, diversification of provision and providers of higher education, increased attention to quality assurance and qualifications frameworks and African continental higher education integration,
 8. Recognizing the importance of high quality teaching and the need for continued professional development of teachers/researchers in higher education in Africa with particular attention to pedagogical capacity and research,
 9. Realizing that the process for the recognition of qualifications should take into account
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quality assurance mechanisms and the accreditation of programmes and institutions,

10. Conscious of the need to develop capacity in higher education quality assurance, qualifications frameworks and recognition practices,
11. Appreciating the need to reinforce exchanges of information and best practices on recognition of qualifications in higher education,
12. Mindful of the need to operationalize the modalities included in the 2014 Addis Convention in order to facilitate and prepare for its implementation,
13. Acknowledging that the main responsibility for successful implementation lies with Member States, while also calling for strong regional and continent-wide cooperation and coordination,

Implementation

14. Recommend the establishment of the Informal Working Group for the implementation of the 2014 Addis Convention composed of representatives of Member States (which could invite as observers other stakeholders as appropriate),
15. Define the mandate of the Informal Working Group for the preparation of the implementation and operationalization of the 2014 Addis Convention until the Convention enters into force and the Convention Committee be established. The Informal Working Group, through its members, will also contribute to facilitate and accelerate ratification processes,
16. Request Member States to designate a country focal point, with relevant expertise, to the Informal Working Group for follow-up of the process,
17. Identify the following actions as concrete steps to be followed by the Informal working Group to achieve its mandate:
 - a. Ratification: develop a ratification campaign, including advocacy for signature by all Member States to signal their interest, identify champion countries in each region and mobilise the Regional Economic Communities (RECs);
 - b. Implementation: launch initiatives for the development of mechanisms and tools for the implementation of the Convention at national, regional and continental levels, and share information on progress already made;
 - c. Capacity building: participate in developing and implementing continental capacity development initiatives to build and sustain Member States capacities in areas related to quality assurance, recognition and qualification frameworks,
18. Invite UNESCO and the AUC to draft the Terms of Reference for the Informal Working Group and propose a date for its first meeting,
19. Further invite UNESCO and the AUC to act as coordinators of the Informal Working Group.
20. Agree to meet at least once a year and carry out the activities in accordance with the Terms of Reference, and hold its first meeting by the end of 2015.