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DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
Press Release

THE PROPOSED PAN-AFRICAN ACCREDITATION AGENCY RECEIVES A BOOST FROM HIGHER EDUCATION AGENCIES AND MEMBER STATES



Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, December 13 2018- The Education Division of the Department of Human Resources, Science and Technology (HRST) of African Union Commission held a Technical Consultation Workshop on establishment of Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency at the Headquarters of the African Union Commission in Ethiopia, Addis Ababa.

The principal objective of the workshop was to propose modalities of establishment and operationalization of the Pan African Accreditation Agency, as called for by the AU Assembly. Higher Education agencies working on Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Member States, regional and continental institutions shared experiences on good practices from which lessons can be distilled towards harmonization at regional and continental levels, and to create basis for establishing a Continental Accreditation Agency.

In a statement read on behalf of the Commissioner for HRST, H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor, the Head of Education Division Dr. Beatrice Khamati Njenga said that quality education is imperative if Africa has to attain this vision, generate home-grown solutions to African challenges, and participate fully in, and influence the global knowledge economy as demanded by Agenda 2063. She pointed out the urgent pre-occupation with quality in the higher education community that has resulted from heightened expectations of stakeholders for the university to be more relevant and responsive to society, producing skills for critical thinking, innovation, employability and entrepreneurship. She added that the values of pan-Africanism and pre-dispositions for responsible citizenship need to find their way into university curricula.

“As Africa opens up internal borders through the African Continental Free Trade Area and other mechanisms in response to our vision of an integrated Africa, there has to be increased articulation across education system on the continent. The AU has therefore been at the forefront in partnering with the higher education and scientific community to develop robust instruments of quality assurance and harmonization of higher education in Africa, in order to strengthen mutual recognition of qualifications for enhancing intra-African academic collaboration, mobility and skills portability”, Dr. Beatrice Khamati Njenga said.

In her remarks, Dr. Beatrice Njenga called for improvement of teaching and learning to enhance alignment between the skills and knowledge on one hand, and the needs of the labour market, industry and development on the other hand. She presented Agenda 2063 aspirations and the objectives of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa, and reminded participants that it is everyone's business to ensure alignment of their various efforts with the continental agenda. She presented education as the most powerful frontier for Africa to harness the advantage of its youthful population and abundant resources at national, regional and continental levels.

The Senior Expert in the Education Division, Dr. Yohannes Woldetensae, made a comprehensive presentation on the initiatives of the African Union Commission to promote quality and harmonisation in higher education in Africa. He mentioned the Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF), with robust tools including the African Quality Rating Mechanism and the African Quality and Standards that have been developed in partnership with the Association of African universities and leading African experts, with support from the European Commission. The PAQAF was developed through a highly consultative process and validated at a continental workshop involving representatives of universities, national and regional quality assurance agencies and ministries for higher education. "One of the major goals of the African Union Strategy for Harmonization is to provide an integrating platform to develop regional harmonization initiatives that cohere into a continental process of harmonization and also promote the development of harmonization quality assurance mechanisms" he stressed.

The participants of the Workshop acknowledged that the creation of a continent-wide accreditation body will strengthen cooperation in quality monitoring of higher education institutions; development of comparable methodologies and harmonization of accreditation procedures. They agreed to promote and facilitate information exchange and experience sharing on quality assurance mechanisms and accreditation practices.

The meeting stressed the need to advance the implementation of the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance and its domestication at national and regional levels. It was also recommended to employ the African Quality Rating Mechanism for institutional evaluations and continuous quality improvement in African higher education institutions in collaboration with national and regional quality assurance agencies, as well as university associations.

It was proposed to establish a Technical Working Group that will work on the development of a Statute that specifies the legal framework and the organizational set-up of the Pan African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency. The representatives of National Agencies from 15 Member States including officials from eight regional and continental organizations attended the technical workshop.

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