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African Union Delegation Advances Interregional Education Cooperation At Bogotá (Colombia) Dialogue

The African Union Commission's Department of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation concluded a highly successful participation in the Third Interregional Dialogue on Education and Development in Bogotá, Colombia (November 4-7, 2025), with the five-member delegation achieving significant outcomes for Africa-Latin America-Caribbean cooperation.

Deputy Chairperson H.E. Amb. Selma Malika Haddadi and ESTI Commissioner, H.E. Prof. Gaspard Banyankimbona Setting the Strategic Vision

The Dialogue opened with strong political backing from the highest AU levels. H.E. Selma Malika Haddadi, Deputy Chairperson of the AUC, sent a video message disseminated during the opening session, emphasizing that "Latin America, Africa, and the Caribbean are natural partners, united by shared histories of resilience." She called for moving beyond North-South cooperation models toward a truly multipolar world where excellence and innovation are nurtured in all regions.

H.E. Prof. Gaspard Banyankimbona, Commissioner for ESTI, articulated the African Union's vision for equal partnership in his opening address, declaring: "We claim our rightful place as co-architects of a common future." He outlined concrete priorities, including joint research in renewable energy and food security, academic mobility expansion, policy peer learning on quality assurance, and skills development partnerships aligned with real economies.

Director Prof. Saidou Madougou: From Strategy to Action

Building on this strategic vision, Prof. Saidou Madougou, Director of ESTI, translated policy frameworks into operational roadmaps through two key interventions. Following the roundtable on universities as engines of interregional cooperation, he delivered concluding reflections emphasizing how African higher education institutions, including the Association of African Universities (AAU), the Conseil Africain et Malgache pour l'Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES), the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA), the Southern African Regional University Association (SARUA), The Association of Arab Universities (AARU), among others, serve as foundations for implementing continental strategies.

Director Madougou deepened this analysis during the plenary session on inclusive education and science for development, examining five dimensions of exclusion: gender, geography, disability, poverty, and ethnicity.

PAU Rector, Prof Jean Koulidiati on Demonstrating Results and Building New Partnerships

PAU Rector Prof. Jean Koulidiati demonstrated that Africa-LAC cooperation already delivers concrete results. He presented evidence from the May 2024 residential program at PAU's Institute for Water and Energy Sciences in Algeria, where three Argentine universities trained

over 60 graduate students from 32 African countries in renewable energy, water management, and climate adaptation. Prof. Koulidiati also held bilateral meetings with Argentine university rectors and Universidad EAN of Colombia, culminating in a Letter of Intent signed with Colombia's Minister of Higher Education to replicate successful partnership models with emphasis on student mobility and entrepreneurship.

Expanding the Dialogue and Concrete Outcomes moderated by Mr. Chigozie Emmanuel

Mr. Chigozie Emmanuel Okonkwo, Education and Skills Advisor, moderated the plenary session on education, research and development as an interregional vision, facilitating dialogue among speakers from UNESCO, the European Commission, and the Government of Catalonia.

Mr. Okonkwo also delivered a substantive presentation on "TVET and the Future of Work" during a parallel session, where he outlined the African Continental TVET Strategy 2025-2034 and proposed seven concrete areas for Africa-LAC cooperation in technical and vocational education and training. His interventions emphasized the importance of skills development for youth employment, the role of public-private partnerships, and the potential for South-South cooperation to accelerate progress in addressing shared challenges between Africa and Latin America.

The Dialogue achieved a major milestone with the signing of a Declaration of Intent between the AUC and Colombia's Ministry of Science, Technology, and Innovation. The Declaration commits both parties to facilitate the mobility of researchers, students, and technical staff between Colombian and African institutions; promote skills development partnerships empowering young entrepreneurs, especially women; and establish a Bi-Regional Working Group to coordinate actions and implement collaborative initiatives.

A Symbol of Pan-African Continuity pronounced by Commissioner, H.E. Prof. Gaspard Banyankimbona

In a moment symbolizing Pan-African continuity, Commissioner Banyankimbona's closing address was moderated by his predecessor, H.E. Prof. Mohamed Belhocine, Former ESTI Commissioner and current OBREAL Senior Advisor, whose vision during the African Year of Education 2024 laid the groundwork for this Dialogue. The Commissioner Banyankimbona emphasized polycentrism as the defining imperative for 21st-century cooperation, stating: "For too long, knowledge and innovation have been concentrated in the Global North. This model is outdated, unjust, and no longer works."

The comprehensive engagement of the AUC delegation demonstrated the African Union's commitment to transforming dialogue into sustained cooperation benefiting African youth, researchers, and institutions.

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