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Developing the African Continental Qualifications Framework INAUGURAL WORKSHOP

**2 – 4 September 2019
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

OPENING REMARKS

**H.E. Prof. Sarah Anyang Agbor
Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology
African Union Commission**

**Various distinguish Representations of African Union Member States,
Ms. Anna Burylo,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On behalf of the Chairperson of the Africa Union Commission, H.E. Dr. Moussa Faki Mahamat and on my behalf, I am pleased to welcome you all to the Headquarters of the African Union and make opening remarks at this Inaugural workshop on Developing the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) which is an important step towards the development of Continental integration and for facilitating transparency of skills and qualifications in support of the AU Agenda 2063.

Agenda 2063 recognizes Science, Technology and Innovation as one of the major drivers and enablers for achieving development goals of the African Union and its Member States. It articulates that Africa's sustained growth, competitiveness and economic transformation will require sustained investment in new technologies and continuous innovation in areas such as education, agriculture, clean energy, health and bio-sciences.

The African Union Commission has developed the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) 2016-2025, integrating all sub-sectors of education and training systems. The strategy provides the framework for reorienting Africa's education and training systems to meet the required knowledge, competencies, skills, innovation and creativity that links education to the human resource needs of Agenda 2063. The development and retention of highly qualified African human capital is of strategic

importance to the attainment of the vision of the African Union of peace, integration and prosperity.

African higher education system needs to meet quality standards to equip African youth with key skills and attitudes to enable them to be active and responsible citizens. Africa's greatest capital is the youthful population who must be appropriately empowered into the intellectual capital with relevant skills, values and attitudes to take charge of Africa's development.

The Vision of African Union to build an integrated Africa requires a harmonised education system. And the Heads of States and Governments expressed their commitment to establish harmonised mechanism to ensure comparable higher education in Africa. The Executive Council Decision also requested Member States to set up mechanisms for harmonisation and quality assurance processes. Ms. Burylo as you rightly stated, the African Union has put in place a strategies for harmonisation and quality assurance.

The establishment of a Continental Accreditation Agency was called for by a Decision of AU Heads of States and Governments as the need for such an agency has become imperative following the increased drive towards regional integration, harmonization of higher education and strengthened Intra-African collaboration.

The African Union is implementing the "African Continental Free Trade Area" and this requires among others that the AU Member States establish a continental qualifications framework to encourage the free movement of persons and promote mutual Recognition of Qualifications.

Africa needs an education development programme that would address education holistically at all levels to ensure that the human resource and intellectual capacity gaps are filled and achieve continued progress towards sustainable equitable development in Africa. Developing the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) is indeed a very useful initiative that will contribute to ease Intra-African mobility of learners and workers and facilitates skills portability.

I would like therefore to express my gratitude to the European Training Foundation, the GIZ and the European Union for co-organising this important workshop in partnership with the African Union Commission.

This workshop is a useful platform for key stakeholders to discuss on the process of establishing an overarching framework and possible modalities for integrating National and Regional Qualification Frameworks. I am happy that several Member States ministry of education officials, representatives of Regional Economic Communities, quality assurance agencies, regional university associations, and international experts are attentively attending this meeting to share their experiences and provide valuable inputs.

The African Union Strategy for Harmonisation of Higher Education incorporates a strong focus on establishing effective mechanisms with shared view on quality assurance, common agreed standards and an equivalent way of assessing the quality of education provisions. The coordinated efforts of regional and continental organizations are decisive to execute the harmonisation strategy.

Because different higher education systems in Africa are structured in different ways, it will be important to integrate into a continental system of harmonization in order to ensure comparability and the recognition of academic qualifications.

The development of African Continental Qualification Framework reinforces harmonisation of education programmes as it is supportive to integrate existing National Qualification Frameworks and Regional Qualification Framework for ascertaining comparability and equivalencies of qualifications, leading to an African-wide structure that will act as reference.

Furthermore, it is an important instrument to implement Addis Convention on the Recognition of Academic Qualifications which is a legal mechanism to strengthen cooperation between African countries for comparability of study programmes and reinforcing effective quality assurance mechanisms at the national, regional and continental levels.

Until now the Addis Convention is ratified by seven Member States and it will become operational as soon as ten countries have ratified it. There is therefore an urgent need to raise this issue and advocate for expedited ratification and implementation of the Addis Ababa Convention in your respective countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The rapid growth in the number of students and higher education institutions and the increased focus on employability, have made quality and quality assurance central topics. The Continental Education Strategy

for Africa (CESA) identifies the significance of quality in its strategic objectives. Africa needs quality education to ensure that the human resource and intellectual capacity gaps are filled and achieve continued progress towards sustainable equitable development across the continent.

A well-functioning quality assurance system within institutions is essential for mutual recognition of academic qualifications. It is vital that African countries and universities work to improve the quality of their educational programmes and to establish coherent systems of equivalence.

The African Union Commission is implementing the Pan-African Quality Assurance and Accreditation Framework (PAQAF) to promote quality assurance and harmonization of higher education programmes in Africa, in collaboration with Association of African Universities and European Union. The PAQAF is vital to strengthen cooperation among regulatory bodies. Our partnership with the European Union (EU) is very important as we seek to upscale skills for work. This innovative market skills are important and we cannot overemphasize the importance.

This workshop is bringing together representatives of several national and regional quality assurance agencies and education ministries to brainstorm and critically examine the process of developing an African Continental Qualifications Framework. The Workshops' outcomes will be presented to Ministers at the Specialized Technical Committee on Education, Science and Technology that will be held here in Addis Abba in October 2019.

Having schools for employability is important. In Kazan, at the World Skills Competition 2019 we say; “Where there is a skill, there is a way”. As we move towards the “Africa We Want”, many partners and institutions have assisted us. We want to appreciate EU for accompanying us in this journey as symbolised by the presence of the Deputy Head of Delegation, Ms. Anna Burylo.

ACQF will enhance transferability and transparency of qualifications across the board and contribute to the Pan African Qualification Network.

Sincere gratitude to the distinguished representatives of Member States here present, our partners and stakeholders, Representatives of RECs, UNESCO, ILO, UNICEF, Technical Agencies from Member States, the ACQF Advisory group and the project management team. Without you there will be no audience, nor progress. Thanks for the engagement.

Let me conclude by giving you the assurance that the Commission will provide all possible support for successful implementation our initiatives. I wish you all fruitful deliberations and productive discussions.

Thank you for your kind attention