

Accra, February 24 – 26, 2009

**Meeting on Regional Harmonization of
Higher Education for Africa**

**Revision and Expanded Ratification
of the Arusha Convention**

Presenter

Yohannes Woldetensae, PhD

Consultant and Senior Expert in HE Quality Assurance

Dr. Yohannes Woldetensae
(Senior Expert and Consultant)

The Arusha Convention

- It is the continent's primary framework for the recognition of academic qualifications through national, bilateral, regional, and continental mechanisms.
- It was adopted in 1981 in Arusha, Tanzania
- Twenty contracting states ratified the convention
→ Algeria; Benin; Burkina Faso; Burundi; Côte d'Ivoire; Equatorial Guinea; Egypt; Gabon; Guinea Conakry; Lesotho; Niger; Nigeria; Rwanda; Senegal; Seychelles; Sudan; Tanzania; The Holy See; Togo; and Zambia.

Major Objectives of the Arusha Convention

- To reinforce of African solidarity and integration
- To support the comparability of programmes and recognition of qualifications
- To facilitate the movement of students and trained human power across the continent
 - Promote integration of Africa
- To contribute to UNESCO's efforts towards promotion of international academic mobility and recognition of qualifications

Arusha Convention Regional Committee

- There is a Regional Committee, composed of representatives of the contracting states, to follow up the implementation at continental level
- The secretary of the regional committee is the Head of the higher education unit at the BREDA (delegating the Director-General of UNESCO)
- The regional committee is also under the responsibility of the COMEDAF
- The link between the Regional Committee and the national and regional bodies is weak

Why is that needed to revise the Arusha Convention

- To promote the transparency and credibility of procedures and criteria used in the evaluation and recognition of studies and degrees
- **To take account of the changing nature of the HE environment** → Quality Assurance, Accreditation distance learning, and cross-border HE
- To better respond to the new challenges of a changing higher education environment
- Revision and Expanded Ratification of the Arusha Convention → **A legal mechanism to implement the AU HEP Harmonization Strategy**

Dr. Yohannes Woldetensae
(Senior Expert and Consultant)

The revision of Arusha Convention

- UNESCO (in partnership with AUC) is in process of reviewing and updating the Convention
- It will be more detailed than the current one
- The revised Convention will make much stronger commitments than are currently required
- **Countries will need to develop timetables for action that indicate the dates by which they will achieve the targets.**
- It will be accompanied by a series of Annexes, each of which will require separate ratification once it has been developed

Revised Annexes will seek to set out the following

- Requirements that individual countries will need to fulfill in setting up appropriate accreditation and QA bodies that will be recognized by the AU
- **The formats in which information on HEIs and programmes will be shared with other countries**
- Agreed quality criteria that facilitate improved performance of HEIs on the continent, and that will form the basis of an African rating system
- The Convention is conceived as a dynamic tool which must be adjusted regularly

IMPLICATIONS - Revised Annexes

- The contracting States are expected to establish a database of information on the status of recognition of their institutions and programmes
→ **Set-up a National Information Center (NIC)**
- Network of National Information Center will be formed that will be attached to the regional committee
- National Education Information Systems need to submit comparable data to a continental system

Issues to be considered

- Reinforce the cooperation between Regional Committee and the national bodies in charge of QA and recognition of qualifications
 - There is a need for regular consultation
- Academic qualifications issued in contracting states will be recognized as those of local
- A prerequisite to the recognition of a foreign degree is that it is recognized in the country where it was obtained → ACCREDITATION
- Guidelines on the implementation of the revised convention are essential

Issues to be considered

- **Set up a Harmonization Strategy Unit in AUC and create Arusha Convention Desk (Representing AUC, UNESCO, AAU, RECs)**
- **Update the revised Arusha Convention in partnership with AU Commission and UNESCO**
- **Undertake one-on-one lobbying of countries, and promote ratification through RECs**
→ **Initiate Awareness Creation Campaigns**
- **Prepare revised Arusha Convention and Annexes to COMEDAF IV → Ratification**

CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Ratification requires greater advocacy
- One of the ways of securing commitment to AU harmonization strategy is through the Revision & Expanded Ratification of the Arusha Convention
- Resources need to be invested in finalizing its review and updating the convention
- Carry out studies on procedures and criteria for recognition of academic qualification
- Without functioning QA system, it would be difficult to ensure recognition of qualifications

THANK YOU



Any Questions?