



**ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITES AFRICAINES**

اتحاد الجامعات الافريقيه

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

(24 – 26 February 2009, Accra, Ghana)

DISCUSSION POINTS

Prepared By

Dr. Yohannes Woldetensae

Consultant and Senior Expert in Higher Education QA

Themes for Group Discussions

The following four themes will be discussed in group sessions during the regional harmonization meeting.

- 1. Proposals for effective networking and cooperation between regional organizations and national regulatory bodies of higher education (quality assurance and accreditation agencies, Ministry of education, etc).**
- 2. Feasible approaches to streamlining harmonization activities between RECs and the corresponding Regional Associations of Universities.**
- 3. Identifying specific roles of regional and continental organizations in implementing the African Union strategy for harmonizing higher education programmes.**
- 4. Drafting a work plan for harmonization activities for the year 2009.**

Objectives of the Group Discussions

The group discussions have the following objectives:

- To share information and practices among key organizations involved in regional harmonization strategy;
- To recommend effective approaches of cooperation and networking for moving the African Union Harmonization process forward;
- To sustain commitments of regional and continental organizations to the process of harmonizing higher education in Africa
- To define specific roles and responsibilities of RECs, regional associations of universities, and relevant continental organizations in implementing the AU Harmonization Strategy; and
- To propose annual working plan of harmonization activities for the year 2009 with follow-up and reporting mechanisms.

GROUP DISCUSSION – Session One

Theme

Proposals for effective networking and cooperation between regional organizations and national regulatory bodies of higher education (quality assurance and accreditation agencies, Ministry of education, etc)

The discussion aims to identify pragmatic ways towards establishing strong links for effective coordination of structures and networks between regional and national levels that create basis for maintaining political commitment to the process and implementation of the Africa Union harmonization strategy.

The successful implementation of the Harmonization Strategy is dependent on ownership by Governments and relevant organizations at national and regional levels. Regional bodies play a key role in raising awareness through communication with national regulatory bodies. However, interaction between RECs and Ministries of Education seems insufficient or weak. This makes the integration of higher education in regional harmonization activities difficult; and the coordination of actions in member states is seriously challenged.

Discussion points

Identify mechanisms to facilitate formal cooperation and effective networking between:

- Regional associations of universities and national accreditation and quality assurance bodies
- RECs and national Ministries of Education
- Regional associations of universities and national associations of HEIs
- RECs and national accreditation and quality assurance bodies

How should responsibilities be allocated between regional organizations and national regulatory bodies in implementing the harmonization process?

How can the issue of countries belonging to more than one REC (i.e. Countries' multiple membership in RECs) be effectively addressed?

What should be done to establish strong education desks in the Secretariats of RECs?

What are effective mechanisms for establishing data-base at regional level based on national information systems with focal points at ministries of education and quality assurance agencies?

How is to establish and sustain regular reporting and follow-up mechanisms?

GROUP DISCUSSION – Session Two

Theme

Feasible approaches to streamlining harmonization activities between RECs and the corresponding Regional Associations of Universities

The discussion aims to recommend effective mechanisms for facilitating the coordination of integrated activities between RECs and Regional Associations of Universities towards regional harmonization.

It is necessary to create synergy and strong links between regional organizations' initiatives so that harmonization activities are aligned. There is a need to ensure effective collaboration among key players at regional levels.

Discussion points

- To what extent is the AU Harmonization Strategy recognized as one integral activity and working agenda in the regional organizations?
- How can the involvement of RECs be enhanced and integrated with the corresponding Regional Associations of Universities to ensure that their higher education harmonization processes are effectively coordinated at regional levels?
- What are effective ways to strengthening the links between the RECs and other key organizations in the areas of quality assurance with a view of reinforcing regional cooperation towards a common continental system of harmonization?
- How can regional associations of universities and RECs streamline existing initiatives for effective implementation of the AU Harmonization Strategy?
- What are effective strategies to publicize and create awareness on harmonization initiatives among member institutions and governments?
- How should country-level activities be coordinated at regional levels?
- What mechanisms should be established to monitor progress reports from RECs and Regional Associations of Universities on harmonization processes?
- What will the potential challenges to implementation be? How can these be overcome?

GROUP DISCUSSION – Session Three

Theme

Identifying specific roles of regional and continental organizations in implementing the African Union strategy for harmonizing higher education programmes

The discussion aims to identify the specific roles that regional and continental organizations should play in taking the harmonization process forward.

It is necessary to clarify the tasks of key players involved in the process of harmonization. There is need to discuss and explicitly define the specific roles of each organization in implementing the harmonization strategy. Clarification of roles among AU Commission, RECs, and other regional and continental organizations is vital.

Discussion points

- Which new commitments will emerge at your organization in implementing the AU Harmonization Strategy?
- What roles should your organization play in taking the harmonization process forward?
- Identify the specific roles of regional and continental organizations to promote and advance the AU Harmonization Strategy?
- What additional financial and human resources are required within the RECs and other key organizations in order to implement the harmonization process? Identify mechanisms to ensure adequate provision of funding.
- What strategies should be adopted to execute the quality rating mechanism at continental, regional, national, and institutional levels?
- What strategies should be developed to ensure ratification and implementation of the Arusha Convention?

GROUP DISCUSSION – Session Four

Theme

Drafting a work plan for harmonization activities for the year 2009

The purpose of the discussion is to draft annual plans of action as input for implementing the Harmonization Strategy; to sustain the commitments of regional and continental organizations; and to create basis for monitoring and follow-up.

Specific actions plans and time frames need to be set by key continental and regional organizations to enable successful implementation of the AU Harmonization Strategy. It is expected that the groups will produce draft annual plans of action that will create basis for implementing the harmonization process; and to reviewing progress on the achievement with formal reporting and regular follow-up mechanisms in execution of next phases.

Discussion points

- Identify what roles your organization/institution should play in taking the harmonization process forward?
- Identify a limited but focused number of harmonization activities to draft your organizations' work plan for the year 2009.
- Propose joint action plans at continental and regional levels with agreed implementation time frame.
- What are effective strategies and monitoring mechanisms to facilitate the implementation of the identified activities?
- What are the ***immediate next steps*** in implementing the AU Harmonization Strategy, the quality rating mechanism, and the revision and ratification of the Arusha Convention?