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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

# **Workshop on Establishment of a Continental Accreditation Agency for Higher Education in Africa**

**10 – 11 April 2013, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

## **OPENING REMARKS**

**Prof. Jean-Pierre Ezin**  
**Commissioner for Human Resources, Science and Technology**

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am delighted to be able to welcome you all to the headquarters of the African Union.

Welcome to this Workshop on Establishment of a Continental Accreditation Agency for Higher Education in Africa which is an important step towards the development of Continental integration and harmonization.

The African Union identifies higher education as a strategic resource for the achievement of its mission and underscores the need to revitalize it. As part of its revitalization initiative, the AU Commission has developed a harmonization strategy that will help to facilitate mutual recognition of qualifications and encourage Intra-Africa mobility of students and academics.

The issue of quality is paramount for the revitalization of higher education systems across the continent. It is therefore crucial that African countries and universities work to improve the quality of educational programmes and to establish coherent systems of equivalence and accreditation.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to speak briefly about African Union initiative that will impact on the overarching goal of improving inclusiveness and quality of higher education in Africa.

In its endeavor to contribute to quality assurance, the African Union Commission spearheaded the development of the African Quality Rating Mechanism (AQRM) to provide an objective measure of quality in African higher education institutions through institutional self-assessment and external validation.

The AQRM was developed through extensive dialogue with the African higher education community involving experts from AU Member States and Regional Economic Communities; as well as with the consultation of key partners including the Association of African Universities.

The quality rating mechanism is instrumental to ensure that the performance of African higher education institutions can be compared against common criteria and enhance their global competitiveness. The mechanism also supports the development of an institutional culture of continuous quality improvement.

It is our expectation that African universities will take ownership of their own quality assurance processes and use the quality rating mechanism as one means of supporting continuous quality improvements and to compete effectively in the increasingly global higher education environment.

Efforts to implement the quality rating mechanism are currently ongoing, in collaboration with the Association of African Universities.

## **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Africa needs to organise its education and research capital into high quality, world class hubs for exemplifying the production and nurturing of innovations taking charge of positive contribution to human and social development as well as industrialisation in Africa. This will be possible and successful through collaborative pan African efforts, where resources are pooled and harnessed rationally for mutual good.

The strategic vision of the Pan African University is to develop institutions of excellence in science, technology, social sciences and governance, which would constitute the bedrock for an African pool of higher education and research.

The Pan African University is a flagship programme of the Commission to revitalize higher education and research in Africa. It seeks to nurture quality and exemplify excellence making African higher education attractive; globally competitive and relevant to Africa's need and aspirations.

As one major requirement for the Pan African University is ensuring excellence through internal quality assurance mechanisms and external accreditation, the establishment of a Continental Accreditation Agency is vital to guarantee high quality of education provision in its Institutes and to ensure its international recognition.

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.

There are currently numerous activities in the African continent in the field of quality assurance at all levels (institutional, national, regional, and continental levels). It is important to enhance complementarity between the different initiatives.

It is our strong view that Initiatives in higher education quality assurance shall be better coordinated and aligned towards a common Africa vision by identifying opportunities for synergies to optimise positive outcomes, and avoid unnecessary duplications.

A partnership at national, regional and continental levels is indispensable to assure the quality of higher education systems and their compatibility in accreditation process. Indeed, formal cooperation between national and regional regulatory bodies is crucial to foster development of compatible accreditation standards and continental framework for quality assurance.

There is therefore an urgent need to exert coordinated efforts to establish a continental accreditation agency for higher education in Africa.

The initiative of establishing an African Quality Assurance Framework and a Continental Accreditation Agency need the support of all the key partners. This Workshop is a good opportunity to explore a common ground for joint action.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and tangible results.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION**