ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

13th GENERAL CONFERENCE

“Transforming African Higher Education for Graduate Employability and Socio-Economic Development”

Hotel Okoumé Palace, Libreville, Gabon

28-31 May 2013

PROCEEDINGS

November 2013
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<td>AAU</td>
<td>Association of African Universities</td>
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<td>ACBF</td>
<td>African Capacity Building Foundation</td>
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<td>ACDE</td>
<td>African Council for Distance Education</td>
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<td>AUC</td>
<td>African Union Commission</td>
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<td>AUCC</td>
<td>Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada</td>
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<td>AUF</td>
<td>Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie</td>
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<td>AVU</td>
<td>African Virtual University</td>
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<td>CAMES</td>
<td>Conseil Africain et Malgache de l’Enseignement Supérieur</td>
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<td>CASE</td>
<td>Council for Advancement and Support of Education</td>
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<td>COREVIP</td>
<td>Conference of Rectors, Vice-Chancellors and Presidents (of AAU)</td>
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<td>EUA</td>
<td>European University Association</td>
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<td>HED</td>
<td>Higher Education for Development (USA)</td>
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<td>HE(I)</td>
<td>Higher Education (Institution)</td>
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<td>2iE</td>
<td>International Institute for Water and Environment Engineering, Burkina Faso</td>
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<td>IDRC</td>
<td>International Development Research Centre (Canada)</td>
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<td>IEP</td>
<td>Institutional Evaluation Programme (of EUA)</td>
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<td>KRA</td>
<td>Key Results Area</td>
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<td>LEDEV</td>
<td>Leadership Development Workshop (of AAU)</td>
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<td>MADEV</td>
<td>Management Development Workshop (of AAU)</td>
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<td>NIS</td>
<td>National Innovation Systems</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
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<td>ODL</td>
<td>Open and Distance Learning</td>
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<td>QA</td>
<td>Quality Assurance (in higher education)</td>
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<td>RENU</td>
<td>Research and Education Networking Unit (of AAU)</td>
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<td>UOB</td>
<td>Université Omar Bongo</td>
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The 13th General Conference of the Association of African Universities (AAU) was held in Libreville, Gabon from Tuesday 28 to Friday 31 May, 2013. It was hosted by Université Omar Bongo. The General Conference is an important event in the life of the Association that is held every four years and, mainly, comprises three major components: a business session where matters relevant to the operations of the AAU are considered; a scientific session where academic papers are presented and discussions are held on a specific theme relevant to African higher education; and a third session where the AAU showcases its various programmes and activities for the benefit of its members.

The theme selected for the 13th General Conference, ‘Transforming African Higher Education for Graduate Employability and Socio-Economic Development’ – was appropriate. The commonly known ‘Arab Spring’ in North Africa has shown that high unemployment, especially among young educated people, can not only lead to serious social and political consequences but equally hamper development. Africa, which has the world’s youngest population, is faced with the challenge of producing a large number of graduates necessary for its development, and yet a significant number of them remain unemployed or under-employed. It is clearly a matter that needs to be addressed urgently. The various issues around graduate employability are covered in the Concept Paper (see Annex I) that was developed by the AAU as a guide for the submission and presentation of scientific papers at the General Conference.

The choice of the host country, Gabon, was also significant. Of the 13 general conferences held since the AAU’s creation in 1967, this was just the fifth time that the conference was being held in a Francophone country, and the second time in Central Africa. Additionally, the host institution, Université Omar Bongo (UOB), is a public university which is not only having to cope with graduate unemployment, but is also facing numerous challenges including inadequate funds and infrastructure, poor governance, and massification, challenges described by Prof. Bonaventure Mve-Ondo, (former Rector of UOB) in his presentation on the higher education environment in Africa, at the Conference in Gabon. One pertinent issue raised after that presentation was that the challenges appeared to be more prevalent in Francophone than Anglophone universities, a matter that higher education policy makers in Francophone countries might want to consider seriously.

The keynote address delivered by the World Bank was undoubtedly one of the highlights of the Conference. The Bank had for a long time been associated with the policy of promoting basic education in preference to higher education in developing countries. But the message in the address was loud and clear: the World Bank now considers higher education as one of its key priority areas, and this message came from no less a person than the World Bank’s Vice-President for Africa, Mr Makhtar Diop. The collaboration between the World Bank and the AAU in promoting the Bank’s Africa Centres of Excellence Programme (initially in West and Central Africa), was another interesting development.

In the business session, two important modifications were made to AAU’s Constitution: first, the Immediate Past President would continue to be a member of AAU’s Governing Board for an additional term of four years so as to allow for continuity; and second, henceforth the President and the Secretary-General would not come from the same country – this had become necessary in view of such a situation having arisen in 2010.

The Conference, at the business session, also approved an important document – AAU’s Core Programme for the period 2013-2017 under the theme ‘Accelerating Human Development in Africa through Higher Education’, which outlines the core areas of activities over the next four years, taking into account AAU’s Strategic Plan (2011 – 2015). The Core Programme was also presented to AAU’s partners at the ‘Friends of AAU’ meeting, now a recurrent event at every General Conference. Two
noteworthy recommendations made at that meeting were: AAU should increase its efforts to recruit more members, and it should be more strategic in its fund raising drive.

The 15 scientific papers presented in plenary sessions as well as the 3 parallel working groups on the topic of graduate employability covered a wide range of issues and produced a wealth of important views and recommendations. These included: graduate employability is a complex issue requiring a multi-stakeholder approach; universities should try to respond to labour market needs but should not be solely dictated by them; university-industry linkages, in their myriad forms, are vital for promoting employability; employers look not just at a graduate’s expertise in a specific discipline, but more importantly at the soft skills acquired; and a certain level of entrepreneurship skills acquired in university can equally facilitate graduate employment. These were vital pointers and take-aways for participating universities at the Conference.

At the end of the Conference, a Communiqué summarising the main outcomes of the Conference and listing a number of recommendations on graduate employability addressed to various stakeholders, was prepared. The Communiqué is reproduced at Annex II.

The next AAU General Conference will be in 2017 – a milestone year for the AAU as it marks its 50th anniversary.
PARTICIPATION

Two hundred and ninety-four (294) participants attended the General Conference, 277 from Africa and 17 from outside Africa. The full list of participants appears in Annex III. For comparison purposes, there were 250 participants at the 12th General Conference held in Abuja, Nigeria in 2009, and 296 at the 11th General Conference in Cape Town, South Africa in 2005.

The Table below shows the linguistic distribution of the African participants. Although the General Conference was being held in a Francophone country, the majority of the participants were from Anglophone countries.

![Linguistic Distribution of Participants from Africa](image)

The Figure below shows the distribution of African participants by region. Three quarters of the participants came from the Central (40%) and West (35%) regions. The very poor participation from Northern Africa is noticeable; in fact there were only 2 participants from Libya. The countries with the largest number of participants were Gabon (93), Nigeria (39) and Ghana (35).
1.0 OPENING OF THE CONFERENCE

The Conference was opened on Tuesday 28 May at the Ministry of Economy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism under the patronage of His Excellency Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon, represented by Honourable Dr. Seraphim Moundounga, Minister of Education, Scientific Research, Youth and Sports.

PROFESSOR MARC LOUIS ROPIVIA (Rector, Université Omar Bongo) welcomed all participants to Gabon on behalf of Université Omar Bongo. He compared the holding of the AAU General Conference in Gabon to that of the Summit of the Organisation of African Unity held in Gabon in 1977, the latter promoting political Pan-Africanism, the former university Pan-Africanism.

The Conference, he noted, provided an opportunity for exchanging experiences, finding solutions and developing strategies that would help transform African higher education so that graduates can be productively employed to assist in the socio-economic development of Africa. He stressed on the importance of training for entrepreneurship and felt the private sector must collaborate with African higher education institutions to ensure graduate employability. He informed delegates that Gabon, within its National Development Plan, had launched public-private partnership initiatives to enhance graduate employability under the three pillars of environment, industrialisation and services.

While maintaining its cultural identity, he said, Africa should recognise that the former colonial powers had helped to integrate African higher education with that of Europe, and that Africa should welcome foreign institutions.

Concluding his remarks, Professor Ropivia advised that the AAU should aim to become a Pan-African network of higher education, encouraging regional integration and helping to create an African higher education space.

PROFESSORETIENNE EHOUAN EHILE (Secretary General, AAU) observed that by holding the General Conference in Gabon, a new page was being written in the history of the AAU. Since the creation of the AAU in 1967, he noted, this was the fifth time that an AAU General Conference was being held in a Francophone country, and the second time only in Central Africa. He also recalled that in 2013, the African Union was celebrating its 50th anniversary and in 2017, when the next General Conference was due, the AAU would be celebrating its 50th anniversary. These, he said, were milestones in the history of African countries and institutions, and provided opportunities for promoting socio-economic development in Africa.

He mentioned that graduate unemployment, poor quality and lack of funds were major challenges facing African higher education. Addressing these challenges was the collective responsibility of all higher education stakeholders and required innovative approaches. He encouraged collective effort in addressing these challenges, noting that ‘we should not ask what higher education can do for us, but what we can do for higher education’.

He thanked the Government of Ghana for its continued support to the AAU since its creation, and in particular now for providing funding for a new AAU Secretariat building on land generously donated by the University of Ghana, Legon. He closed his address by thanking all the funding agencies for their contribution to the AAU, the Université Omar Bongo for hosting the General Conference, and the President of the Republic of Gabon for his financial and logistic support.
PROFESSOR GEORGE ALBERT MAGOHA (Acting President, AAU) stressed on the need for African higher education institutions to produce graduates who would, holistic in their approach add value to the continent; be employable and able to promote Africa’s development, be aware of global challenges and how these affect Africa, and who could become employers themselves and thus create jobs. He mentioned that the theme of this General Conference could be considered as a continuation of that of the previous Conference in Abuja in 2009, which dealt with sustainable development.

He then explained that the General Conference is a major event in the life of the AAU that comprises both academic and business sessions. The Conference discusses an important academic issue, measures the AAU’s achievements over the past four years, proposes a Core Programme of activities and budget for the next four years and, elects a new President and Board. He welcomed the fact that the General Conference was being held in a Francophone country, especially as the AAU was often regarded as being too Anglophone.

Professor Magoha thanked the President of Gabon for his support and generosity, the former and current Rectors of Université Omar Bongo for agreeing to host the Conference, the AAU Secretary General and staff for their hard work, and the various funding partners for their contribution towards AAU’s activities.

Goodwill messages were delivered by representatives of the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), the European University Association (EUA), the Higher Education for Development, USA (HED), the World Bank, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the Conseil Africain et Malgache de l’Enseignement Supérieur (CAMES) and the African Virtual University (AVU). They all commended the AAU for its work, reaffirmed their support for the AAU and looked forward to continued partnership with the Association.

Address and Opening by His Excellency Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon

The address of the President of Gabon was delivered on his behalf by Honourable Dr Seraphim Moundounga, Minister of Education, Scientific Research, Youth and Sports.

The President noted that Gabon was honoured to host the 13th General Conference of the AAU. He briefly shared his vision for Gabon and that of higher education in Africa. He noted that in 2010, Gabon developed its National Development Plan, and in that connection undertook a review of the whole education sector, including higher education, in the country.

The President emphasised that employment of graduates was a priority for the whole of Africa. The fact that between 7 to 10 million graduates from African higher education institutions are unable to find employment was a matter of concern. To address this issue, the President recommended that public-private partnerships should be encouraged, as well as inter-university partnerships at regional and international levels. He observed that there was the need for developing a pact of trust among all universities.

The President wished success to the General Conference and declared it officially open.
2.0 PLENARY SESSION 1: AAU BUSINESS SESSION 1

The first Business Session was held immediately after the Opening Ceremony on Tuesday 28 May at the Hotel Okoumé Palace and was chaired by Professor George Magoha, Ag. President of AAU.

Conference Programme and Procedures

The Conference considered and adopted the Conference programme; adopted the Rules of Procedure for the Conference; and elected the Conference Bureau as follows:

- Prof. George Magoha (Ag. President, AAU) - Chairperson
- Prof. Russel Botman (First Vice-President, AAU) - Deputy Chairperson
- Prof. Etienne Ehile (Secretary-General, AAU) - Member
- Prof. Marc-Louis Ropivia (Rector, UOB) - Member
- Prof. James Emezulu, UOB Local Organizing Committee - Member
- Dr. Coffi Noumon, African Capacity Building Foundation - Member

Elections for President, Vice-Presidents and Members of AAU’s Governing Board

The Conference:

- Adopted the proposed Rules of Procedure for Elections after deleting the phrase ‘On the second full day’ from Rule 22, which read as follows: ‘On the second full day, the General Conference shall first elect the President and Vice-Presidents of the Association, and then elect the Members and Alternate Members of the Governing Board.’
- Defined the functions of the Elections Committee and approved its composition as follows:
  - Prof. Bruno Bekolo-Ebe (Vice-President, AAU) - Chairperson
  - Prof. Kwasi Adarkwa (Board Member) - Vice-Chairperson
  - Prof. Mandla Makhanya, Vice-Chancellor, University of South Africa - Member
  - Prof. James Epoke, Vice-Chancellor, University of Calabar, Nigeria - Member
  - Prof. Charles Olweny, Vice-Chancellor, Uganda Martyrs University - Member
- Took note of the available vacancies on AAU’s Governing Board.
- Took note of the eligibility criteria for a candidate to be nominated as President, Vice-President or Member, and the criteria for nominating such a candidate.
- Took note of the distribution of the countries in the five regions of Africa.
- Approved the convenors of Regional Caucuses for nominating candidates for available vacancies as follows:
  - Central Africa: Prof. Bruno Bekolo-Ebe
  - Eastern Africa: Prof. Charles Olweny
  - Northern Africa: Prof. Karrar A. Bashir Elabbadi
  - Southern Africa: Prof. Lazarus Hangula
  - Western Africa: Prof. Ishaq Oloyede
• Agreed on the date and time of meeting of the Regional Caucuses as well as the deadline for submitting nominations.

**AAU Membership Matters**

The Conference was informed of the admission of 42 Full Members and 8 Associate Members by the Governing Board between the previous General Conference held in Abuja, Nigeria in 2009 and the COREVIP held in Stellenbosch, South Africa in 2011. These admissions were ratified by COREVIP in 2011.

Since COREVIP 2011, the Governing Board had admitted 22 additional Full Members and 14 Associate Members. The list of these members appears at Annex III. The Conference ratified the above decisions of the Governing Board.

The Conference was further informed that the AAU Secretariat had received requests from the American University in Cairo, Egypt and Université M'Hamed Bougara de Boumerdès, Algeria to cancel their membership of the AAU. The Conference ratified the decision of the Governing Board to accept the resignation of these two institutions.

**3.0 PLENARY SESSION II: HIGHER EDUCATION IN GABON**

The session was held on Tuesday 28 May afternoon and was chaired by Dr Tully Cornick, Executive Director, Higher Education for Development (HED). He introduced the speaker, Prof Bonaventure Mve-Ondo as a former Rector of Université Omar Bongo and also the former Vice-Rector of the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF).

Prof. Mve-Ondo introduced his speech by mentioning that in spite of several national consultations and reports by experts, reform and improvement in higher education in Gabon had remained elusive. Higher education was at the cross-roads and if no remedial action was taken, the end result could be devastating.

He then gave a brief history of the Université Omar Bongo (UOB) noting it was set up in 1970 as a full-fledged, multi-disciplinary University of Gabon. The University then underwent two processes of ‘dismemberment’ to address institutional massification and decentralisation of higher education. First in 1986, when the Faculties of Science and Engineering were removed to create the University of Science and Technology of Masuku, and then in 2002, leaving UOB with only the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Faculty of Law and Economics. A further restructuring took place in 2008 when several other public higher education institutions were created and at the same time several private institutions made their appearance.

Prof. Mve-Ondo mentioned that throughout their evolution, the public higher education institutions in Gabon had been marked by crises with frequent student strikes and political crises, leading them to a gradual decline. He blamed the situation on the following factors:

• Huge demand for higher education.
• Massification in the institutions.
• Insufficient and obsolete infrastructure.
• Lack of funds.
• Lack of career guidance for potential students.
• Irrelevance of the curriculum and programmes to the world of work, leading to high graduate unemployment.
• Poor salaries and conditions of work of teaching staff.
To remedy the situation, he proposed a major reform in university governance leading to greater institutional autonomy and improved internal management; improved output of research of relevance to industry and to national development; greater linkages between the university and the productive sectors to ensure that the university responds to their needs; and improved conditions of service of teaching staff.

**Discussion**

In the discussion following his presentation, the speaker explained that although staff salaries in Gabon might appear attractive, the cost of living in Gabon was high. He also emphasised on the need for greater involvement of all stakeholders in the governance structure of the university, including the private sector.

Issues were raised regarding the perceived better performance of Anglophone institutions compared to their Francophone counterparts. Responding to this, the speaker observed that in Francophone countries, the public university is heavily dependent on the state and the governance structure greatly limits its autonomy, while in Anglophone universities decisions are taken collectively by boards and committees, and there is greater autonomy. He reiterated the need to have an effective and more participatory governance and management system in public universities.

Other main points of the discussion included:

- The rapid increase of public universities had worsened the situation of graduate unemployment.
- Massification in public universities would continue to increase given the large number of youth in Africa, and appropriate solutions need to be found urgently.
- Strategic planning and Quality Assurance are vital for reforming the higher education sector in Africa.
- There is the need for greater government-university collaboration in order to address the national developmental problems in Africa.

In his closing remarks Prof. Mve-Ondo mentioned the need for a paradigm shift and a change in mind-set in the way African universities operate. This would require a concerted effort by all stakeholders to find the appropriate solutions, as universities have a unique role to play in taking Africa to its next level of development. In his opinion, continuing business as usual is unacceptable.

### 4.0 PLENARY SESSION III: KEYNOTE PRESENTATION

The third Plenary Session, held on Wednesday 29 May morning, was chaired by Prof. Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang, Minister of Education of Ghana and AAU Board member. The keynote address was delivered by Ms Ritva Reinikka, Director for Human Development, Africa Region of the World Bank. Her address was complemented by a video-recorded message by Mr Makhtar Diop, Vice-President, Africa Region of the World Bank. Both addresses are provided in Annex IV.

Both Ms Reinikka and Mr Diop reiterated the World Bank’s commitment to support higher education in Africa, and emphasised the importance of science and technology for promoting development and for addressing crucial challenges confronting society today, including inadequate fresh water, environmental degradation and energy.

Ms Reinikka mentioned that the World Bank had identified higher education institutions as paramount to boost economies on a sustainable growth trajectory. However, there were five key areas that needed to be addressed to enable higher education meet the continent’s development challenges. These include:
• Improved quality and standards in universities.
• Equipping graduates with knowledge that can be used to resolve the continent’s specific needs.
• Better governance of academic institutions.
• Public and private partnership in higher education.
• Practical, fair and affordable way to increase investment in higher education.

She observed that in the past, the World Bank had supported basic education and this yielded improvements, especially in terms of increased enrolments. But the Bank was also supporting higher education in Africa, its contribution representing nearly 40% of all development-partner funding to higher education institutions in Africa.

Both speakers mentioned the World Bank’s collaboration with the Association of African Universities to support the setup of 15 African Centres of Excellence in West and Central Africa with an amount of US$8 million per institution.

**Discussion**

During the ensuing discussion, the decision of the World Bank to establish centres of excellence in Central and West Africa was welcomed but the general concern was that US$8 million per centre was on the low side, and would require beneficiary countries to provide additional support. Suggestions were also made to extend the initiative to East and Southern Africa, and to consider private universities as well as teacher training colleges and schools of education. There were also concerns that the proposed creation of centres of excellence would create elitism among the universities, and felt that it would be better to support poor universities through funding for infrastructural and academic development.

The general feeling among participants was that the World Bank’s interest in higher education indicated a paradigm shift, since in the past it had focussed its efforts and support on basic education to the neglect of tertiary education. Participants felt that the World Bank should be commended for this decision which they believed would also encourage African governments to be more committed to supporting higher education, since they normally respect the opinion of the World Bank.

Participants also noted that poor infrastructure is another challenge that hinders increased enrolment and the provision of quality education, and made a call for a Marshal Plan for the reconstruction of universities in Africa.

In response to questions on the road map for the five priority areas in higher education identified by the World Bank, the Bank representative indicated that education was cross-sectoral and therefore the discussion on improvements in higher education should consider this.

Finally, there was a call for the alignment of all on-going African higher educational initiatives such as the Centres of Excellence, the Pan African University, Twinning Africa and Quality Assurance.

In her response to the questions and comments, Ms Renikka mentioned that it had taken African governments three years to develop the concept of centres of excellence and the World Bank was therefore committed to ensuring its success. With regard to the low budget for the centres of excellence, she reiterated that some centres of excellence already existed in Africa and only needed to be revamped.

She agreed that there was a paradigm shift in terms of the World Bank’s support for education and the World Bank wanted to be a catalyst to help visionary leaders of Africa in their bid to develop their countries.
On the deteriorating infrastructure in African universities, she appealed to the participants to work hard to reverse the trend. She emphasised the need for continuous dialogue between all stakeholders to find funding for education in Africa. The dialogue could review best practices in the other parts of the world and assess their suitability for Africa. Ms Renikka mentioned that the World Bank was working with China and Japan to support skills development in Africa. She also agreed about equity in funding of higher education and the need for reducing disparity among institutions in Africa.

She agreed that higher education was cross-sectoral and policies and programmes should be comprehensive to address all related sectors and recommended continuous dialogue among all stakeholders of education.

Finally, Ms Reinikka also agreed on harmonising higher education activities in Africa to ensure efficient implementation and achievement of their intended benefits.

5.0 PLENARY SESSION IV: PAPER PRESENTATIONS

This was the first of three plenary sessions devoted to the presentation of academic papers. The session was held on Wednesday 29 May morning and was chaired by Professor Marc-Louis Ropivia, Rector of Université Omar Bongo. It contained five presentations dealing mostly with the role of higher education in the development of Africa.

5.1 For an Efficient System of Higher Education in Africa

Author: Abdou Salam Sall

Prof. Sall observed that the global economy had changed significantly and these changes had impacted on higher education. Given the causal relationship between higher education and development, higher education should be of concern to society at large.

He outlined some of the major challenges facing higher education in Africa, noting that governance of public universities needed to be improved and the governance structures should include representatives of industry and alumni as these groups can help universities in many ways. Another challenge was on meeting the huge demand for higher education. He observed that in spite of the significant increase in the number of public and private tertiary institutions, and student enrolment, institutions are unable to absorb the growing demand. Universities therefore need to streamline both their programmes and their mode of teaching to meet labour market demands. The use of blended learning, combining face-to-face teaching with distance and online learning could help both in increasing access and making teaching more relevant. Another way of improving employability is to incorporate entrepreneurial skills in all programmes.

Professor Sall also emphasised the need for staff development in the areas of research as African universities perform poorly in this regard. The creation of science and technology parks and business incubators would not only make university research output more relevant but also create entrepreneurs. However, he noted that not all universities need to be strong in research. Africa should aim for a differentiated higher education system with some universities placing emphasis on research and others concentrating on teaching.

The speaker also stressed on the need to inculcate a civic culture in students by encouraging and supporting their participation in social and community activities.

Professor Sall also spoke to the challenge of mobilising financial resources in public universities. He observed that while government should provide the necessary funds, students should also contribute
through fees and universities must explore ways of raising funds from society. Prof. Sall concluded his presentation by proposing that the African Union should establish an African Foundation for Research, Innovation and Mobility, to be financed by between 3-5% of revenue accrued from Africa’s natural resources and other contributions.

5.2 Africa Challenging and Trusting her Socially Responsive Universities
Author: Pai Obanya

The presenter advanced key personal ideas developed over the years on the need for universities in Africa to treat their triple mandate of knowledge generation (research), knowledge transmission (teaching) and knowledge sharing (responsive social engagement) as integral parts of a single academic mission. This implied seeing the three elements as interwoven, a situation in which research would feed into teaching and both would promote social engagement, and the lessons from such engagement would inform research and teaching processes, and the results of which would again be fed into engagement with the society.

Responsive social engagement, he said, would require that universities reach out to the ‘world out there’ in a more comprehensive sense. This implied an outreach strategy that went beyond working with large corporations, or the organised private sector, or powerful government agencies. The strategy would extend its tentacles to governments (at national and sub-national levels), and, medium and small scale socio-economic operators that were likely to become the nerve centres of employment generation in the coming years. A very crucial complement to universities working intimately with the ‘world out there’ would be African governments challenging their own universities. Professor Obanya noted that Africa stood to gain in more ways than one by building a network of internal development partners capitalizing on the knowledge resources of its own institutions. The end product would be two sides of a mutually beneficial coin – in which universities would continuously enhance their social relevance and by which governments would be reaping development dividends from a viable socially-responsive partnership with universities. The arrangement stands the chance of addressing the challenge of sustainable funding in universities, while promoting cost-effectiveness in the design and execution of government policies.

5.3 Socio Economic Development and Employability in Africa: Pertinent Issues
Author: Fidele Pierre Nze-Nguema

Prof. Nze-Nguema’s presentation dealt with the interaction between higher education and socio-economic development and employment in Africa. He first outlined the three functions of higher education, namely contribution to human development (in particular human resource development); research, including the training of faculty, scientists and researchers; and social service, which facilitates linking man with his environment. He also noted the three aims of higher education, which are preserving culture through transmission of knowledge; adaptation of youth to the imperatives of society; and transforming society through education.

Higher education challenges were identified including protection of the socio-economic and cultural environment; aligning scientific and technological development to the needs of society; promotion of universal values; helping to create synergy between education and social cohesion; ensuring that higher education addresses the major social challenges such as unemployment, poverty and migration; and ensuring a link between universities and their immediate environment.

The speaker put forward and elaborated on three main hypotheses without which there can be no quality and relevant higher education: (a) training for employment, taking into account the needs of society; (b) socio-economic development based on local cultural values; and (c) socio-economic development geared towards a productive human capital.
Prof. Nze-Nguema concluded that there was the need for re-building the higher education system in Africa based on four fundamental principles: 1) a redefinition of the functions of higher education, taking into account modernity and excellence, development of a technological culture, vocational training and continuous education, and openness and cooperation; 2) selection and orientation of students based on the imperatives of professional life; 3) a search for substantial resources with a concern for diversification; and 4) participation of students in all decision-making bodies.

5.4 From the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) to Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA): the British Council Regional Efforts on Graduate Employability

Author: Olufemi A. Bamiro

Prof. Bamiro pointed out that across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, high youth unemployment, growing graduate unemployment and the emerging voice of young Arab people, had brought the issue of employability to the forefront of the political agenda. Whilst in most developed economies, the employability agenda was well established, in the MENA and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) regions, this agenda was far less developed. This was what led the British Council (BC) to adopt a regional approach to the problem of graduate employability, first in the MENA region and currently in SSA.

He reported that the scoping studies of eight SSA countries - Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, Nigeria and Ghana – had highlighted, among others, the weak quality of curricula and materials being delivered that were often not related to employer needs, thus affecting graduate employability. This had led the BC to focus its research for the period 2011-2015 on how learning, teaching and research in universities were linked to employability and inclusive development. The research, which had started at the beginning of 2013, involved the UK, South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria and Ghana.

He then presented the lessons from the outcomes of the research already conducted on graduate employability in eight countries in the MENA region. The research explored the views and perspectives of three key groups of stakeholders on employability – students and recent graduates, employers of labour, and higher and vocational institutions. Most significant, among the findings, were: a call for more active-learning and skills-based approaches from employers, students and from within higher education institutions; capacity issues with respect to designing and assessing outcome-based curricula and in the delivery of less traditional teaching and learning approaches; the need for extra-curricular opportunities to develop employability skills, such as work placements and internship; employability being often a peripheral activity, led by the careers office of an institution and being viewed as the role of a single department, or being outsourced; and the absence of country or region-wide collaborations to share practice. The research report of the MENA region presented areas for possible international collaboration towards addressing the above issues.

5.5 The Vital Role of Effective Communication in University Advancement Campaigns

Author: Tobie de Coning and Mohamed Shaikh

This paper dealt with how internal and external communication in a higher education institution, in this case Stellenbosch University (SU), can create a favourable climate for investment. The authors mentioned that, as prerequisites, a university’s communications department needed to be clear in its goals, be strategic and pro-active and ensure institutional ownership of its plan. The communications activities should be centrally coordinated, evaluated and regulated. According to the authors, creating a climate for investment also needed information sharing, stimulating interest, building a profile and enhancing involvement. The communications department should take its cues from the vision of the institution to develop a persona for its campaign.
The authors then described how SU used the themes from the Millennium Development Goals to help create sustainable solutions to some of South Africa’s and Africa’s most pressing challenges. These themes were promoting human dignity and health, promoting democracy and human rights, promoting peace and security and promoting a sustainable environment and a competitive industry. The themes were embedded in the institution’s teaching and learning, research and community interaction activities. Based on the themes, SU developed its HOPE project which became a vehicle to position SU as a leading global university, showing how it was tackling global challenges and promoting the university’s eminence through its research, staff and resources.

A huge publicity campaign was used to promote the HOPE project in order to attract potential funders and partners locally and globally. The first step was to create internal awareness and buy-in from staff and students. There was then a public launch nationally using the media and conferences, and finally promotion at continental and international levels, with launch events in USA and Europe.

After three years, the authors commented, HOPE had become part of the DNA of the core activities of SU. They outlined many of its achievements and, from their experience, concluded that the success of communication and liaison had a significant role and impact on creating a favourable climate for SU’s fundraising campaign.

5.6 Discussion
The following points were highlighted during the discussion that followed the five presentations:

- By developing a relevant strategy and effectively communicating it to the community, African universities can harness considerable support and involvement from its stakeholders.
- African universities were encouraged to be ‘social responsive’ in all their activities - teaching, research and outreach – in order to address pressing societal needs.
- In reference to the British Council presentation on graduate employability in the MENA and SSA regions, it was observed that graduate employability was also a concern in the UK, and perhaps Africa should learn from its own internal successes. The example of the 2iE in Burkina Faso where 95% of the graduates were recruited within six months of graduation was mentioned as a case in point.
- It was noted that the university’s mission goes beyond knowledge transfer to ensuring that it equips and empowers others to seek knowledge themselves.
- Given the relevance of universities to society, it was suggested to consider not only the present but also the future.
- The meaning of society was clarified to include a country and all its components.

6.0 PLENARY SESSION V: Paper Presentations

Plenary Session V, held on Wednesday 29 May afternoon, featured five presentations on graduate employability with a focus on country experiences and causative factors. The session was chaired by Professor Is-Haq Oloyede, former AAU President.

6.1 The Impact of the Socio-Economic Environment on Higher Education in Zambia
Author: Velanasi Mwale Munsanje

The presentation provided a brief profile of higher education in Zambia, noting significant increase in private institutions following the introduction of liberalization policies in the 1990s. Access to higher education in Zambia, however, continues to be a challenge. Economic reforms which emphasized trade liberalization, privatization of state-owned enterprises, promotion of direct foreign investment
and increased support for private sector development had resulted in increased employment opportunities in the informal sector and reduced job openings in the formal sector. Statistics on employability rates showed higher employability in agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors.

Although higher education in Zambia was responding to the demand of the labour market and the socio-political environment, gaps in the regulation of tertiary education, inadequate number of competent faculty, and uncompetitive salary levels still posed a problem.

Against this background, recommendations were made for monitoring private education to ensure quality. Additionally, it was recommended that provincial universities should focus on skill needs of their individual provinces to ensure that their graduates fit into existing vacancies.

6.2 Human Capital Development and Graduate Employability in Post-War Liberia
Author: Shefiu Dabiri

The presenter noted that while graduate employability was a global challenge, in post-conflict Liberia it was even more worrisome. Recent census data showed a remarkable decrease in youth unemployment but this statistic was questionable in view of increasing crime rates and frequent demonstrations by unemployed youth.

The presenter blamed the situation on a dysfunctional higher education system which he observed was a direct result of the fourteen-year Liberian civil war. Apart from the outright destruction of higher education infrastructure, there was also the loss of human capital and disruption of school programmes. In addition, tertiary education curricula was outdated and limited in scope, resulting in low quality of graduates. There was also a concentration on humanities and administration to the detriment of fields like agriculture, education, engineering and building construction, where employment opportunities were more readily available.

In response, the Government of Liberia had initiated efforts to address these challenges. These included the development of a higher education strategic plan and the introduction of higher education projects to promote agriculture, engineering and health education. While laudable, the projects had not achieved the expected results because of corruption and poor supervision.

The presenter recommended integration of ICT into the curricula, introduction of technical and vocational training and increased government collaboration with the private sector, as the way forward.

6.3 Graduate Employability: Analysing the Factors that Influence Graduate Unemployment in Ghana
Authors: Patrick Darkwa and Addae Boateng Adu-Gyamfi

The presenter (first author) outlined the results of a survey of unemployed graduates’ views on employability. The survey was undertaken against a background of increased unemployment in Ghana and criticisms that higher education institutions were producing unemployable graduates. Data collected showed that the majority of respondents attributed unemployment to a disconnect between skills taught in higher education institutions and industry skill needs; high expectations with regard to salary; lack of creativity; and non-availability of jobs. Additionally, respondents thought the educational system required some restructuring to make it more responsive to the needs of industry.

The authors suggested that the national body responsible for higher education should work together with the governing councils of higher education institutions to restructure curricula and make them more responsive to the needs of industry. Suggestions were also made for improvement in the
delivery of graduate programmes and the introduction of community programmes to build graduates’ confidence.

6.4 Linking Higher Education and Employability: A Case Study of Graduates (2009) at the University of Mauritius
Author: Deepa Gokulsing

The presentation discussed the results of a tracer study of 200 selected graduates of the University of Mauritius and established links between higher education and employability. The study was deemed relevant in view of Mauritius moving towards a knowledge-based economy. The presenter observed that for an island economy with little natural resources, human capital was critical for development. An overview of higher education in Mauritius was provided, which highlighted an increase in private higher education providers and government’s efforts to increase enrolments. There was also high preference among the population for employable skills and therefore courses were tailored to job market demands.

The survey findings showed a high rate of employment among the sampled population with the majority having full-time jobs within one year of graduation. The minority of graduates without jobs were either pursuing further studies or were temporarily off work to attend to family commitments. Again, the majority of employed respondents obtained a job within one year after graduation. Reasons for delays in getting employment included lack of openings, irrelevance of acquired skills to job demands, lack of work experience, family commitments and unfavourable conditions of work. Teaching was the occupation employing the highest number of graduates; and the majority of graduates found employment in the private sector. Interestingly, a significant number of respondents said they used the skills acquired from school in their current jobs.

In conclusion, the presenter observed the rise of the private sector as an important higher education provider; lauded the Government of Mauritius’ efforts to increase enrolment; and expressed the hope that the launch of a youth employment programme would help the country to become a knowledge hub.

6.5 Graduate Employability: Botswana’s Approach and Experiences
Author: Chawawa Morgen and Ramaraju Gavarajju

Presenting the paper, Chawawa Morgen noted that Botswana had over half its population under the age of 25 years and the majority of the active population, including graduates, was unemployed, mainly because their skills did not match labour market needs. Many plans and policies had been introduced and institutions established to address unemployment, including the Human Resources Development Advisory Council, the Botswana Training Authority and the Graduate Internship Programme which provides unemployed graduates with a one-year internship. However, these efforts had yet to make a significant impact on unemployment in Botswana. The paper observed that it was only in 2009 that the Tertiary Education Council was set up as a regulatory body for higher education institutions, especially as there were now 13 private colleges with an enrolment of about 4,000 students. Since early 2000, the government had introduced internationalization schemes and exchange programmes in higher education institutions and was using the SADC protocol on education and training to harmonise its higher education system.

6.6 Discussion

Highlights of the discussion following the five presentations included the following:
Caution was sounded about the tendency to exaggerate the mismatch between university training and industry needs since this could negatively influence policy. Also, higher education has a broader mission and should not be regarded as merely education for employment. There was danger that university would close departments because of unemployment – the real causes of unemployment should be investigated first.

Markets are influencing universities but universities should also attempt to influence markets.

Quality in higher education should not just consider curricula and academic environment but also address employability aspects.

There is disparity in Africa between what industry expects from university graduates and what universities produce. African countries should pay attention to societal needs and produce graduates that are needed.

There is a disconnect between government and university policies. Universities and governments need to collaborate to address graduate unemployment.

In setting up universities in different provinces of a country, the real human resources needs of those provinces should be taken into account to avoid unemployment.

AAU should develop strategies to assist higher education in post-conflict and fragile African countries.

7.0 PLENARY SESSION VI: Paper Presentations

Plenary Session VI comprised five presentations on graduate employability, with some focus on entrepreneurship. The session was held on Wednesday 29 May afternoon and was chaired by Professor Koffi Nonou-Ahadzi, President, Université de Lomé.

7.1 Entrepreneurship Education and Graduate Employability in Nigeria
Authors: G. T. U Chiaha and Ruben Amaechi Agu:

The presenter noted that in Nigeria the general unemployment situation is worsening and graduate unemployment is equally deteriorating. As a result, policy makers are trying to promote entrepreneurship to improve employment. One approach has been to introduce Entrepreneurial Education (EEd) in the curriculum of Nigerian universities.

Against this background, a survey was undertaken by the two authors to investigate whether EEd inculcated employability skills in students of Nigerian universities. A sample of 220 labour employers and 100 university graduates serving the National Youth Service Corps from the four regions of Nigeria were selected. The methodology used comprised a questionnaire, interviews and analysis of the EEd content in universities.

Main results showed first that there was no significant difference between the employability skills required by employers in the public and private sectors, and second, that the EEd did inculcate employability skills in students, which made the graduates who had undertaken the EEd programme much more employable. Indeed, the beneficiaries of that programme equally acquired entrepreneurship skills to create jobs for themselves and employ others and thus contribute to the reduction of unemployment. Even when they were employed by other companies, they easily became agents of development and business growth of the enterprises and helped create more business opportunities and jobs.
As a recommendation, the authors urged all Nigerian universities to pay more attention to EEd as a solution to reducing graduate unemployment, and at the same time build linkages with the employers.

7.2 Enhancing the Employability of Blind Graduates in Ghana
Author: Kwabena Adu Poku

The presenter had served twelve years in the Office of Students with Special Needs at the University of Ghana. In 2012/13 there were 106 students with special needs at the University of Ghana, of whom 26 were visually impaired. His experience had allowed him to witness that the University of Ghana had more difficulty in finding temporary and permanent jobs for blind graduates than for the physically disabled.

Against this background, the presenter carried out a study to answer two specific questions: i) why were employers reluctant to hire blind graduates? ii) how could the employability of blind graduates be improved? He conducted a survey, using a questionnaire, on a matched sample of fourteen (14) employers comprising seven company directors who had hired visually impaired graduates, and seven others who did not have that experience. The feedback from those companies which had employed blind graduates showed that: the use of Braille at the workplace was noisy and distractive; most of the graduates had poor job-preparedness and did not have a positive attitude; and there was inevitably additional cost to hiring them as they had to be assisted. Those who had not employed blind graduates expressed fears for the fragile health of the graduates and the potential risk for accidents and falls; were unsure about their performance; noted that there was already gross unemployment in the country and this affected the employment opportunities for blind graduates.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made: i) stop the use of archaic Braille equipment in offices and promoting the use of touch typing devices; ii) government should provide resources/incentives for employers to employ blind graduates; iii) legislation should promote employment of graduates with disabilities (including the blind); and iv) specific jobs should be created or reserved for blind graduates.

7.3 Curriculum Implications of Employers’ Rating and Perceptions of the Employability of University Graduates in Kenya
Author: Charles Nyandusi Mottanya

The paper presented the results of the evaluation of graduates by employers to measure their perception of employability of graduates from Kenyan universities. The study employed a descriptive survey design within a mixed methods approach. The instruments for data collection were a self-designed and self-administered questionnaire for employers and a self-designed interview guide. Data was collected from 341 employers selected through simple random sampling from a target population of 3000 members of the Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE). Complementary qualitative information was collected from three key informant interviewees representing the three main organizations that have a relevant stake in the employability debate: The Federation of Kenya Employers (FKE), the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA), and the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KNCCI).

The main findings of the study showed that:

- Most employers did not have any particular preference for a job-specific degree; they judged the employability of graduates by specific attributes and competences.
- More than half of the employers preferred graduates of private universities.
• Over half of the employers rated the employability of graduates in Kenya as average or below average.
• The majority of the employers perceived the level of involvement of trade and industry in university education as low.
• All the employers indicated that they frequently offered opportunities for field or industrial attachments to university students, but were rarely involved in curriculum or course development.

In the light of these findings, the author concluded that to enhance the employability of their graduates, universities must embed soft skills in their basic curriculum; public universities should emulate the best practices of their private counterparts, such as smaller class sizes and closer collaboration with employers; and universities should urgently engage potential employers in the design of their programmes and curricula.

7.4 Harnessing Career Entrepreneurship as an Optimistic Measure of Graduate Employability in Cameroon
Author: Fomba Emmanuel Mbebeb

This paper examined the impact of employment policy in higher education in Cameroon and looked at factors influencing how graduates fare in the labour market. The study tested a model of antecedents and outcomes positioning strategies for entrepreneurship education as evidence of intent to an entrepreneurial career and self-employability.

Processed data were collected from 739 graduates of the Bachelor-Masters-Doctorate (BMD) system of one Anglo-Saxon university and one French-dominated bilingual university.

The results showed that entrepreneurship education, skills, attitudes, social norms and self-esteem were significant predictors of intent for an entrepreneurial career. It was also noted that the mean differences varied by gender, disciplinary orientation, language groups and professional experience but there were no significant differences between the two universities.

Quantitative analysis of the data showed significant evidence of the impact of policies on the provisions relating to the employability of graduates. However, the qualitative analysis revealed gaps in policy formulation and implementation of the BMD system. Therefore, the author suggested strategies for a responsive generation of nascent entrepreneurs and concluded with an analysis of policy and practical implications of the employability agenda, and suggestions on new directions for future research.

7.5 Integration of Sustainability in Entrepreneurial Development: the Case of the Raymond Ackerman Academy for Entrepreneurial Development
Author: Anthony Petroustsas

This paper first assessed the impact of local employability and business development of the young people in South Africa, and also sought to measure the overall potential of integrating sustainability principles and values in conventional entrepreneurial training.

With a brief overview of entrepreneurship among young people in South Africa as background, the author presented a case study illustrating the creation of sustainable jobs and sustainable projects in local communities through the reestablishment of sustainability workshops for graduates interested in working with environmentally-friendly community businesses and social enterprises.
The case study focused on a business development programme initiated by the Raymond Ackerman Academy of Sustainability in partnership with the communities of the Cape Region and "Green Communities", a local non-governmental organisation. The objective was to obtain employment opportunities for participants at the end of their training which focused on entrepreneurship, employability and integration of communities, the environment and economy entrepreneurial development.

Based on the outcome of the case study, the presenter noted the need for youth participation in community projects and local businesses that can create a vital link for the benefit of graduates, employers and entrepreneurs in this field. He stressed that this dynamic relationship between students and community organizations created opportunities for students to meet local community organizations and potential employers working on issues related to sustainable development in the region.

7.6 Discussion

Issues raised and suggestions made during the discussion that followed the five presentations are summarized below:

- Degrees from private institutions are not always considered better than those from public institutions. In many African countries the best students prefer going to public institutions as they are regarded as more prestigious. Also, private institutions have the flexibility to charge economic fees and to limit their programme offerings to those directly linked to the world of work, unlike their public counterparts.
- Short industrial attachments can indeed facilitate graduate employment. However, most universities find it difficult to handle such a scheme given large student numbers.
- Entrepreneurship education can improve employability, provided it is practical and not theoretical.
- Embedding entrepreneurship skills in all curricula is commendable, provided this is not confused with introducing vocational skills, as is done in some universities in Africa.
- The finding from Kenya that employers do not have a preference for a job-specific degree does not apply to professional fields such as law, engineering, accountancy, etc. However, most studies are clearly showing that, in all areas, employers are looking for core competencies and soft skills.
- The productive sector in Africa is not fully developed and this limits employment opportunities for graduates. The situation can be significantly improved if there is more value-added to the natural resources in Africa before they are exported.
- Universities should develop strategies to assist students with special needs and to empower them to find employment. However, the proposal to have specific jobs reserved for them may not be the right approach.

8.0 MEETING OF ‘FRIENDS OF AAU’

The ‘Friends of AAU’ meeting has now become an established part of AAU’s General Conference. It was started at the 11th General Conference in 2005 and was also held at the 12th General Conference in 2009. The objective of the meeting is to provide an opportunity for AAU’s donors, partners, supporters and well-wishers to comment on AAU’s past and future activities and to discuss opportunities for collaboration.

The meeting in Libreville was held on the evening of May 30 and was chaired by Prof. George Magoha, Ag. President of AAU. Prof. Etienne Ehilé, Secretary-General of AAU, and AAU staff participating in the General Conference were also in attendance. The ‘Friends’ who attended the meeting on invitation were:
Prof. Magoha welcomed those present. Prof. Ehilé then spoke briefly about AAU, noting its membership of 312 HEIs from 47 African countries. He presented the AAU’s Strategic Plan (2011-2015) and provided details of AAU’s new Core Programme which proposed 16 projects under the overall theme ‘Accelerating Human Development in Africa through Higher Education’, with a total budget of US$ 27.6 million. The Ag. President mentioned that funding for some programmes would be ending soon but this did not mean the end of those programmes. New funding is being sought to continue the said programmes.

In discussion, views and suggestions included:

- The membership of AAU represents only about a third of the total number of HEIs in Africa. Efforts should be made to recruit more members. Also, the whole process of membership admission should be streamlined and speeded up. The need to have transparent criteria for membership was also mentioned.
- The Strategic Plan should have a Monitoring and Evaluation component.
- There was an overlap between the period of the Core Programme and the Strategic Plan and perhaps these should be adjusted. It was suggested to have a rolling Core Programme over a shorter period, and the period of the Strategic Plan then adjusted accordingly, depending on availability of funds.
- AAU should prioritise the various areas of activity and identify which ones should receive the support of donors/development partners, governments and members.
- For effective fund raising, AAU should indicate how much funds have already been mobilised and from which sources and what proportion was expected from membership fees, and then provide an estimate of the amount that needed to be raised from other sources.

The Ag. President thanked all the partners present for their participation and support, and expressed the hope that they would continue to work with the AAU.

9.0 PARALLEL WORKING GROUP SESSIONS AND PLENARY SESSION VII

Thursday 30 May was devoted to group and parallel sessions. For the Group Sessions participants split into three Working Groups which met in parallel sessions. Each Group was assigned a chairperson and a topic and was required to focus its discussion on specific questions. The three Groups then later reconvened in plenary for discussion.

9.1 Working Group 1: Socio-Political Environment and Employability

This Working Group Session was chaired by Prof Bruno Bekelo Ebe, Vice President of AAU. The two questions assigned to the Group and highlights of the discussions under each question are given below.

**Question 1: What are the social and political factors that adversely affect employability?**

Members of the Group outlined the following as some of the socio-political factors that negatively affect employability among the youth in Africa.
Unbridle corruption in African countries which reduces the availability of resources to create employment. Resources which could be utilised effectively for creating employment or boost economic growth to provide avenues for employment are lost through corrupt practices. Most African countries are therefore stifled of resources to support socio-economic development.

It was suggested that political, social and religious colourisation had affected the distribution of resources among universities to train human resources for the job market. The distribution of resources was therefore not based on actual needs, potential, capacity or track record of the universities. In effect, the colourisation led to a lack of scientific criteria for allocating resources among universities. Similarly, students’ involvement in politics has led to recruitment based on political affiliation rather than merit.

Rapid changes in the macro-economic environment. For example, most economies experience shifts from traditional industries (mining, manufacturing, construction, etc.) to the service industries and these had negatively affected employment in the other professions.

Further, lack of innovativeness in university curricula to rapidly respond to changes in the market had contributed to the problem. Most of universities have cumbersome procedures for introducing new curricula.

Another factor identified was the numerous political conflicts in Africa, with their negative consequences on socio-economic development of the continent. Resources which could be utilised to support economic activities are lost through these conflicts which have also made the continent unattractive to both indigenous and foreign investors.

In addition, there are few local industries providing employment avenues in Africa, a situation that is further aggravated by industries growing interest in employing graduates who already have skills suitable for their operations.

The Group opined that there is also lack of a clear-cut relationship between the university and the job market that has created a mismatch in African economies, in terms of the type of training universities provided and the demand of the job market.

Question 2: How can the social and political factors be adequately addressed to ensure employability?

The Group was of the opinion that to address the problem of employability, there was the need to:

- Deepen the democratisation process in Africa to create stability and thereby promote socio-economic development.
- Develop a democratic culture through elections and transparency in the judicial system.
- Create a conducive environment for socio-economic development through engagement with all stakeholders.
- Ensure sustained growth in the macro-economic environment, which has a real impact on job creation.
- Mobilise social capital so that all stakeholders get involved in issues of employability.
- Improve employability by regular review of university curricula.
9.2 Working Group 2: Graduate Employability

Working Group 2 was chaired by Dr Coffi Noumon of the African Capacity Building Foundation. The group considered four questions and following is a summary of the discussion points

**Question 1: What is graduate employability?**

- Graduate employability is a set of achievements - skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates/individuals more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupation, which will benefit themselves, the workforce and the community.
- In relation to the above definition, the group also noted that universities can produce graduates who are either unemployable or underemployed.
- Graduates are unemployable when they do not have skills - social, personal and professional attributes - to either be self-employed or to get employed; whereas graduates are underemployed when they are employed in a vocation which does not use their level of knowledge and skills fully.
- For graduates to continue to be employable there is a need for considering issues of skills durability, which calls for constant skills maintenance through competence development.

**Question 2: Why is graduate employability a challenge?**

- One major reason was a lack of linkages between what is needed by the employers and what is being taught in universities. The curricula in most African universities are too restrictive, and do not allow for flexibility. This is inappropriate for the labour market. To address this problem, universities must dialogue with employers to identify the gaps and to assist in teaching vital skills such as problem-solving and team work. It is therefore necessary to have employers’ representatives on university boards/councils.
- Equally, there is the need to enhance students’ voices, enabling them to be involved in all critical stages of decision-making, including policy dialogue. For example, students must be represented in all AAU meetings, especially conferences such as the current General Conference.
- There is a need for African universities to be more innovative in the ways they teach because of gaps in teaching skills in Africa. One of the solutions is to ensure that pedagogical skills are imparted to students when they are still in universities so that after graduation, those who wish to take up the teaching profession can teach effectively.
- The value chain approach is needed to produce quality teachers. A holistic approach, which does not consider things in isolation, is necessary. The value/supply chain approach originated with activities in enterprises and in employment markets, and that would help in formulating training modules. However, the question was whether universities should offer academic or competence skills. It was felt that both are necessary and should be integrated.
- In enhancing quality in higher education, the quality of primary and secondary education must be considered as well. Otherwise universities would experience difficulties in bringing about changes for greater employability of graduates.
- Graduate unemployment could also be due to the fact that universities are either producing more graduates than the job market can absorb, or that the market is too weak. If the market is weak, then the output of graduates has increased too quickly and, disproportionately with regard to the realities of the job market. This could be attributed to a lack of strategic planning and innovation at universities.
Another reason for graduate unemployability is poor orientation of students before they enter the university. There is little or no career counselling, and lack of information on job market requirements. Universities themselves should be properly informed of what society requires in terms of skills.

Another contributory factor is that university graduates lack basic values such as discipline and hard work. Additionally, they are prone to social pressure and care too much about status so that they are not prepared to work in some areas or take on some types of jobs.

Over-centralisation of employment in the public sector might also be another factor. Most graduates look to government as the only source of employment, yet job opportunities in the public sector are diminishing.

Universities must impart lifelong learning skills to graduates. Economic crises are inevitable and then even graduates employed now could later lose their employment; but if they are equipped with lifelong learning skills, it would be easier for them to re-cycle and cope with changes in the labour markets.

Finally, one should be conscious of the fact that the phenomenon of unemployment involves many stakeholders including universities, government and the private sector. Graduates must also appreciate that not all of them can be employed immediately after graduation and that in Africa it takes time for vacancies and employment opportunities to be created.

Question 3: What are the factors that negatively affect employability?

The following were randomly identified by the participants to be factors leading to unemployability, several of which were covered in answers to Question 2:

- Lack of innovation on the part of all stakeholders (universities, students and governments).
- Governance – private sector not being involved in decision making in universities.
- Culture of employment, especially in the public sector, rather than employability.
- Students voice not being heard, with no effective feedback from them. In some universities students’ assessment of lecturers is found to be unacceptable.
- Lack of funding for higher education in Africa and no diversification of sources of funds, which impact on the quality of education.
- Lack of manpower planning by governments. For example, whereas some sectors in Africa such as mining and tourism are growing, national growth strategies do not include plans to create more jobs in these growing areas.
- Mismatch of philosophy of university education and that of labour markets. University education is meant to address total human capacity development but the labour market philosophy demands a graduate who is ready-made with requisite skills.
- Labour market saturation and poor working conditions. Salaries are low in many sectors and, in the teaching profession; teachers are not willing to teach effectively under such conditions.
- Over-enrolment (massification) in universities without consideration of employment opportunities of graduates.

Question 4: How should the problem of unemployability of graduates be addressed?

- Involving professional bodies in the teaching and learning process would ensure that graduates have both the academic qualification and professional certification which would facilitate their employment.
• Providing students with short company/industry internships during their studies can also facilitate their subsequent employment. However, universities should be innovative in planning internship placements as such opportunities are limited in the formal sector in some countries. Some universities are resorting to employment agencies for placing their students.
• Universities should organise Job Fairs, where companies are invited to share their expectations of students and of opportunities for employment.
• There should be effective students’ evaluation of lecturers, and appropriate counselling provided to lecturers who cannot deliver.
• There should be effective use of educational technologies, such as Smart Board, to improve teaching and learning.
• Every university must know its purpose and develop strategic planning to achieve its objectives.
• Value Chain concepts to guide management systems of universities should be implemented.
• Multiple delivery modes, including distance and online learning, must be employed to impart knowledge and provide training in both hard and soft skills. Students should be sensitised to the importance of such skills in their working lives.
• Governance of universities should be improved by involving private sector representatives in their decision-making bodies.
• For African universities to play their role in socio-economic development there is a need of linking curricula with rural development and ensuring that students are given opportunities to practice what they learn at universities in the rural areas.
• Students’ and private sector involvement in curricula design must be mandatory.
• Teaching should have a greater weight in the criteria for promotion of lecturers.
• Before leaving universities, students must prove their employability skills through mechanisms such as exit interviews, preparation of CVs, etc.
• There is need for re-examining the curricula in African universities and streamlining them, as some of them are overloaded.
• Volunteerism should be instilled in students and they should be encouraged to undertake volunteer work.
• African countries should diversify their economies to be able to absorb university graduates.

9.3 Working Group 3: Connect Between Higher Education and the Productive Sector/The Role of the Organised Private Sector

The third Working Group was chaired by Mr Paul Gines, Director General of 2iE and addressed the following five questions:

1. What linkages exist between universities and the private/productive sector, and in what forms?
2. Which sector (industry, manufacturing, services) should be a priority for universities?
3. What strategies need to be adopted for the linkages to be mutually beneficial to both universities and the productive sector?
4. How can existing linkages between universities and the private sector be improved and sustained?
5. What are the challenges facing the existing public and private universities, and the newly created ones?

The chairperson first outlined university-private sector collaboration using the example of his institution, 2iE, which is a mixture of a public and a private institution. He mentioned that 2iE has strong linkages with private companies and many activities are undertaken with them. The private sector collaborates in both teaching and research, and the institution has helped to create many companies.
Il five questions were addressed holistically and summary discussion points are provided below.

- Universities have three basic missions: teaching, research and community engagement. In the majority of cases in Africa, the contribution of the private sector in these missions is too weak and formal, requiring bureaucratic procedure for effecting collaboration.
- Universities’ collaboration with the private sector should be genuine. The private sector can assist in providing training to students; they can also be involved in delivery of lectures.
- The contribution of the private sector to developmental research can also be very useful and help to resolve many of societal problems. One example given was the use of recycled material for the building of low-cost houses. Universities can also create incubators and help develop small scale enterprises.
- It would be difficult to define a priority sector for university collaboration as this would vary according to country or a specific period. However, entrepreneurship and generating self-employment should be a priority for most African countries.
- There is a need for a paradigm shift in universities. They should not have rigid calendars, for example, they could allow for three intakes every year and organise training sessions throughout the year to accommodate the need of enterprises.
- Universities should re-define their role in order to avoid unemployment. The private sector requires specific competencies from graduates, such as languages, management and ICT, and universities should respond to these needs.
- Universities should have greater autonomy to revise their curricula to respond to private sector demands. A revision of curricula should be carried out every 3 or 4 years. Some countries have rigid programmes which can only be changed by regulatory bodies after a long process.
- Various ministries should be aware of the reforms to be implemented in universities. It was suggested that policy makers be invited to AAU conferences to sensitize them on the necessary reforms.
- An example of a university of technology in Nigeria was given which had a degree programme comprising 40% of theory (instead of the usual 80%) and the remaining 60% practical, most of which was provided through internship in industry.
- Universities should have private sector representatives on their governing board/council. Some countries, e.g. Zimbabwe, had created advisory councils with private sector representatives, operating at Faculty or Departmental level.
- It is sometimes difficult for enterprises to determine their manpower needs. They should be organised in chambers of commerce/industry or employers federations to have a global view of their needs, which can then be communicated to universities.
- Universities have a tendency to adopt a social role in attempting to absorb a maximum number of students, resulting in massification. In many universities 80-90% of the programmes are non-productive, e.g. in humanities and social sciences, which are not conducive to finding employment in the private sector.
- There is a need for creating a national observatory of skills and competences in African countries.
- Funding is a major challenge for universities, public or private, but the funding mode should change to enable reform and progress. The private sector can contribute to the financing of universities but this requires a change in approach and attitude by universities.

9.4 Plenary Session VII: Reports from Working Groups and Discussion

The Plenary Session VII was chaired by Prof. Olugbemiro Jegede, former AAU Secretary-General. After all the three Groups had made their presentations, summarising what had transpired in their respective groups, a general discussion took place. The following is a summary of the issues raised.

- There is a need for balancing age and wisdom with unemployment, as some of young graduates feel that late retirement is denying them of opportunities of employment.
• Universities in Africa should think seriously on the possibility of offering binary degrees (with academic and professional qualifications) as this can increase graduate employability.
• In some countries students from well-to-do families have been accustomed to generous allowances from their parents and, on graduation, this deters them from taking up employment where they would earn less.
• One should distinguish between graduates who are qualified and have employability skills but cannot find employment, and graduates who are qualified but who are not employable even if employment opportunities exist.
• There is an urgent need of implementing the Arusha Convention as harmonising qualifications across Africa would help to increase mobility across Africa and thus reduce unemployment.
• Evaluation of lecturers by students should be managed well, by sensitising students of then need to be more objective in their assessment of their lecturers.
• The graduate unemployment crisis is partly due to massive enrolment in universities as a means of postponing the unemployment of school leavers. Universities should, therefore, not be too harsh on themselves on the graduate unemployment situation, as it is not entirely their making.
• The Inter University Council of East Africa, an association of universities in East African countries, has started to partner with the East African Business Council. The partnership has enabled to hold an annual forum where representatives of the productive sector meet academia in showcasing their linkages with the universities.
• The lack of the students’ presence and voice on the debate on employability, which directly affects them, was noted with concern. It was recommended that students should be invited to future AAU conferences, especially when issues concerning them are on the agenda.
• Graduate employability is a complex and dynamic issue involving multiple stakeholders, including government. It requires constant dialogue among them to arrive at a solution. It equally requires a holistic approach to the problem.
• Quality Assurance procedures for institutions should seriously take into account graduate employability as a criterion.

As a take-away, participants were requested to consider and provide answers to the following questions:

- If Senate were to ask you on ways and means to improve employability of your graduates, what would you recommend?
- If you were to meet a minister at the airport and you were asked to tell him/her three things the government must do to improve graduate employability, what would these be?
- If you have young graduates in your family who are not employed, what steps would you take to improve their situation?

The International Journal of African Higher Education (IJAHE) was launched at the AAU’s 13th General Conference by Dr Damtew Tefera, Professor of Higher Education at the University Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, and Founding Director of the International Network of Higher Education in Africa (INHEA). The IJAHE would be a peer-reviewed journal to be published twice a year.

Prof. Tefera explained that this was a joint venture between the INHEA and the AAU. He further added that the INHEA, which was originally set up at the Centre for International Higher Education of Boston College, USA, would soon be moving to the University Kwa-Zulu Natal. The INHEA was currently undertaking several
initiatives, including research on flagship universities in Africa. Its new publication on ‘Financing Higher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa’ would soon be available.

10.0 PARALLEL SESSIONS: AAU PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

In the afternoon of Thursday 30 May, participants again split into three groups which met in parallel sessions. The aim of these sessions was to appraise participants of the various programmes, partnerships and activities of the AAU. The groups did not report back to plenary.

10.1 Parallel Session I: AAU Programmes

The session was chaired by Prof. Kwesi Yankah, President, Central University College, Ghana. Five main AAU programmes were presented.

(i) AAU-CADRE Phase II

The AAU- Capacity Development Project for the Revitalisation of Higher Education Institutions (AAU-CADRE) was presented by Prof Jonathan Mba, Director Research & Academic Planning at AAU. It is a multiple-component project funded by the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF). The first phase had ended and the three-year Phase II had just started. The project has four components:

a) Institutional Strengthening of AAU: improving AAU secretariat’s ICT infrastructure; upgrading and renewal of equipment; recruitment of new staff.

b) Strengthening the Leadership and Management Capabilities of African HEIs: workshops for leadership and management development (LEDEV and MADEV); senior executive attachments for leaders and managers of HEIs.

c) Promoting Knowledge Sharing and Networking among African HEIs: policy relevant research; ICT development; Database of African Theses and Dissertations (DATAD) management; academic mobility programme.

d) Strengthening University-Industry Linkages: promotion of entrepreneurial skills; strategic planning with a strong productive sector focus; expertise in managing and licensing IPR; sharing best practices among institutions.

(ii) SAHEL

The current challenges facing universities, namely – expansion in enrolment, dwindling financial resources, inability to attract young faculty, inadequate academic and physical infrastructure, pressure from stakeholders for more accountability, as well as the competitive environment within which the institutions operate – have combined to make leadership training and succession planning an issue of great importance.

Higher Education for Development (HED), through funding from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), commissioned a study by the AAU to map a strategy for
institutional capacity building in senior and middle level management and leadership for sub-Saharan African higher education institutions.

The Sub-Saharan Africa Higher Education Leadership Development (SAHEL) project was presented by Dr Teshome Alemneh of HED. The objectives of the SAHEL study are to (a) map major challenges on leadership, governance, and management; (b) analyse AAU’s Leadership Development and Management Development (LEDEV and MADEV) programmes and integrate the recommendation from the African Capacity Building Foundation review report; and (c) make recommendations based on the assessment in order to ensure that the programme meets the need of leadership training programmes in Africa.

(iii) International Fellowships Programme (IFP)

The IFP programme was presented by Ms Araba Botchway, project coordinator at AAU. It is funded by the Ford Foundation, provides support for up to three years of formal post-baccalaureate study for Fellows from different countries in several regions of the world, including Africa. Its goal is to enable exceptional individuals who otherwise lack opportunities for advanced study to pursue postgraduate degree programmes.

The AAU coordinates IFP activities in West Africa, specifically in Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal, in collaboration with its partners in those countries. To date some 400 Fellows have been selected from the West Africa sub-region and placed for studies in countries such as UK, Canada, France, South Africa and USA. Most of them have technically completed their studies and have already returned to their country. Based on the Fellows’ experiences, a video documentary on how the programme links higher education to social change has been prepared. This 13-year programme had now come to an end and a tracer study to verify the programme’s return on investments had been initiated. Funding was being sought to continue the project.

(iv) African Universities Responding to HIV/AIDS Phase II

AAU’s HIV/AIDS programme, which is funded by the Swedish Development Agency (Sida), was presented by Dr Daniel Kubuafor, project officer at AAU. Phase I was over the period 2005-2009 and Phase II 2009-2013. The key strategic objectives of Phase II are strengthening top leadership of HEIs on HIV/AIDS responses; coordination of AAU’s sub-regional networks (SRNs) on HIV/AIDS; strengthening university research and training on HIV/AIDS; and strengthening HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment. Some of the activities undertaken by AAU to meet those objectives were:

- A module on HIV/AIDS was presented at AAU’s LEDEV and MADEV workshops and at major conferences.
- Sixteen HEIs were sponsored to develop joint HIV and anti-sexual harassment policies.
- An online certified course on HIV has been developed.
- Grants were allocated to 4 SRNs for implantation of their activities, including carrying out voluntary screening and testing sessions.
- Six grants were awarded to institutions for integration of HIV into their curricula.

Among the challenges encountered by AAU in implementing this programme were: low performance by the SRNs; slow response from universities to request for proposals; limited involvement of Francophone HEIs; and limited funding support to AAU for effective monitoring of SRNs and the activities resulting from institutional responses. Additional funding for the project was being sought.

(v) Research and Education Networking Unit (RENU)
Dr Boubakar Barry, project coordinator at AAU, presented RENU. He mentioned that it was set up at the AAU in 2006 with the support of IDRC, the Partnership for Higher Education in Africa (PHEA), and ACBF. Its objectives are to: address issues of access to adequate and affordable bandwidth for African HEIs; create synergy between the various initiatives on ICT in higher education; promote the creation of National Research and Education Networks (NREN’s); and serve as a clearinghouse for resources on ICT policy and research and education networks.

A milestone in the achievements of RENU is the creation of the West and Central Africa Research and Education Network (WACREN) in 2010, resulting in 8 NRENs being established in the region subsequently. A similar network in the Arab states (ASREN) was established in 2011. Other achievements include: publication of training guides, policy briefs and research study reports; capacity building for nearly 150 campus network managers; negotiation, through AAU, for lower bandwidth prices; and negotiation of 50% discount for acquisition of Internet Protocol resources.

RENU also met with several challenges, including inadequate telecommunications regulatory environment in most African countries, lack of human resources and erratic power supply.

**Discussion**

During the discussion following the above presentations, several questions were raised, answers provided and views expressed. A summary of these follows:

- The AAU was commended for the work being done, which unfortunately was not widely publicised. A suggestion was made for AAU to develop a strong communication strategy which would go beyond the traditional e-courier and other communication tools currently in use.
- To a query from a participant as to who qualifies to benefit from the Academic mobility program, it was clarified that it was personnel from AAU member universities in good standing.
- On staff exchanges, it was mentioned that there was poor feedback on issues such as late payments, weak or non-communication between AAU and host institutions once a staff exchange was in place.
  AAU staff explained disbursement of funds by donors was at times problematic and that activities under this aspect of the project were being reorganised to ensure efficiency.
- A question was asked as to what steps institutions need to take to reap the benefits of lower bandwidth prices as mentioned by RENU. The participant was informed that the best approach to ensure a higher bargaining power would be for the institution to be networked, for example by joining the NREN.
- A query was raised about the relevance of IFP to AAU programmes, clarification on the criteria for selecting IFP Fellows was sought. It was explained that although donor driven, the IFP was a tool facilitating the achievement of one of the mandates of AAU’s constituents, namely community engagement. The selection criteria used included demonstrated community engagement, leadership skills and academic achievement, in addition to the socio-economic background of being from a marginalised community.
- A question was asked as to whether the AAU had commissioned any tracer studies to assess the impact of the LEDEV and MADEV workshops. The AAU staff mentioned that some form of assessment was ongoing but a much more structured one was expected under the next phase of the AAU-CADRE programme.
- One participant opined that there was a need for AAU to obtain adequate/up-to-date data on HIV/AIDS activities on various campuses.
10.2 Parallel Session II: IDRC/CASE

The session was chaired by Prof. John Ssebuwufu, Director of Research and Programmes at AAU. Three projects were presented.

(i) University Research Governance in West and Central Africa

The project was presented by Dr Godfred Frempong, Research Coordinator for the project. He mentioned that the project was in response to perceived deficiencies in the management of research in some African universities. Although research is important for general development and academic progress, universities in West and Central Africa had a poor performance in this regard. Indeed, those countries selected for the study had low knowledge economy and knowledge indices.

The three-year project launched in 2010 is a joint initiative of the West African Office of IDRC, Canada, and the AAU. Its main objective is to improve deficiencies in the management of university research as earlier studies have shown a mismatch between research and development priorities, a lack of interest in research and a lack of capacity for effective research leadership. Six universities (4 public and 2 private) from five countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana and Senegal are participating in the project, which has three components: knowledge production, capacity building and multi-stakeholder relations.

The goal of the knowledge production component is to map the position of universities in national innovation systems (NIS), investigate how universities interact with other NIS stakeholders and examine the synergies between researchers and end-users. A survey at national, institutional and end-user levels was carried out in the participating countries. The findings show that: in all the countries there is no formal NIS; research and innovation responsibilities are split between various ministries and bodies, leading to duplication and wastage of resources; there is a lack of synergy between stakeholders; university-industry linkages are weak; there is no formal monitoring and evaluation system in place; the focus on research in private universities is low; and there is low valorisation of research results. The survey, however, identified some best practices, such as incentive schemes to promote research, the presence of national S&T and innovation policies, including the setting up of a S&T innovation fund.

Discussion

During the ensuing discussion the following views were expressed:

- There is a competitive national research fund that is operational in Nigeria.
- The lack of synergy could promote tension among stakeholders and lead to role conflict and duplication.
- Financial and time constraints in universities could be responsible for low research involvement.
- It is important to have intellectual property policies to engage actively with collaborating institutions but maintenance of patents could be challenging because of financial constraints.
(ii) Universities and Innovation for Inclusive Development

The project was presented by Dr Timothy Esemu. He explained that science, technology and innovation has enabled developing countries to graduate to middle-income status. But economic growth has also widened inequalities in these countries and led to development that is not inclusive.

In most cases innovations do not improve the lives of the poorest. And yet, a significant amount of innovation takes place in poor communities, which can improve their livelihoods and contribute to inclusive development. However, universities rarely interact with such communities in establishing their research agenda.

The project, sponsored by IDRC, aims to address the issues of how universities can re-orient their research focus and work with poor communities to address the latter’s needs. It will seek to link innovation, higher education and development at community level. More specifically, the project will map interactions with communities, investigate conditions that promote university collaboration with communities and advance discussion and advocacy for universities’ involvement in inclusive development.

The presentation was for information only and there was no discussion.

(iii) Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)

CASE is a non-profit association of educational institutions which serves professionals in the field of educational advancement, including marketing and development (fund raising) for higher education institutions.

The presentation was made by Major General Xavier Michel, former President of Ecole Polytechnique, France. He shared his experience of fund raising at the Ecole Polytechnique. First, he presented the institution: a world class educational and research institution with a strong scientific leaning and a culture of excellence. It has nearly 400 faculty and eminent alumni.

The Ecole Polytechnique raised about 70 million Euros, 60% of which was from industry. The fund raising drive was based on internationalisation and 25 companies were involved. An interesting aspect was that a higher proportion of the funds was raised from a few donors. The sources of funds included class gifts, scientific chairs, alumni and parents of students. He then shared some key elements that should be noted in any fund raising campaign. Some of these are:

- Have a project and a vision to guide donors on what to support and how to intervene.
- Exhibit transparency in governance as this builds confidence in the institution.
- Have a plan for the campaign, which should be driven by the head of the institution. The plan should be aligned to the institution’s strategic plan.
- Put in place an office/unit to execute and monitor the campaign as planned, and to show and share results.
- Demonstrate accountability and have clear procedures for managing the funds.
- Focus on enterprises, alumni, foundations, friends, etc.

Discussion

Some of the questions during the discussion touched on how to leverage comparative advantages in fund raising. There was a question on the role of CASE in the process and the speaker mentioned that CASE provides professional and technical support. To a query on the importance of proposal writing in fund raising, it was mentioned that the CASE conference scheduled to take place in Accra, Ghana in October 2013 would address this issue.
10.3 Parallel Session III: AUCC/EUA/ACDE

The session was chaired by Prof J. Emujulu, member of the UOB Conference local organising committee. There were three presentations, namely:

(i) **Strengthening Higher Education Stakeholders Relations in Africa (SHESRA)**

The presentation was made by Mr Robert White, Director of Partnership Programmes at the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC). He first briefly gave an outline of AUCC, a member organisation similar to AAU. He then went on to describe SHESRA, a three-year project undertaken by AAU and AUCC with financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). Its objective is to assist universities to link up more closely with the private sector and position them to better develop the skills and knowledge to meet their countries’ needs. He outlined the three components of the project, indicating the activities and achievements under each.

**Strengthening Higher Education Stakeholder Relations through Strategic Plans.** Fifteen African universities, each in partnership with a Canadian university, received grants to revise their Strategic Plans to incorporate some linkages with the productive sector. Most of these universities had completed the revision of their Plans. Other important outputs from this component are a Policy Brief and a Practical Guide on Strategic Planning, and a training module on Strategic Planning to be delivered at AAU’s leadership training workshop, LEDEV.

**Case Studies of University-Industry Linkages.** Eleven African universities, again each partnering with a Canadian university, were selected to describe a successful case study of university-industry linkages at their institution. Six of these case studies were then selected as best practice case studies and will be published as a book for distribution by AAU. A training module on university industry linkages is also being prepared for use by AAU at its MADEV workshops.

**Strengthening AAU Stakeholder Relations.** The major activity under this component was a survey of AAU members to map their external stakeholder relationships. The report is available online and will be published as a book. Several Applied Policy Research Briefs (e.g. on Business Ethics, IPR, Technology Generation and Uptake) have also been published and have been distributed at this General Conference.

**Discussion**

The main issue raised during the discussion was that while in Canada universities can interact with industry and bring about innovation, in Africa the industrial base is weak. The multi-national companies present in Africa are not interested in R&D as this is carried out in the mother country. This has an effect on capacity building in Africa. It was suggested that in contracts with multi-national companies, African governments should incorporate a clause requiring them to have linkages with universities as part of their corporate social responsibility.
(ii) African Council for Distance Education (ACDE)

The presentation was made by Prof. Tolly Mbwette, Chairman of ACDE Executive Board, and Prof. Mutale Musonda, Executive Director of ACDE. Participants were informed that ACDE is a continental organisation comprising higher education institutions which are committed to expanding access to quality education through Open and Distance Learning (ODL). It was launched in 2004. Currently it has 39 Members (institutions providing ODL) and 7 Associate Members (institutions having an interest in ODL). However, very few Francophone HEIs are members of ACDE. ACDE has six programmes responsible for: Collaboration, QA, Database, ICT, Journal and Scholarships.

ACDE is partnering with three other regional organisations for promoting its objectives:

AAU: ACDE works through AAU to promote ODL and advocacy for ODL to AAU member institutions. The AAU Secretary-General is a member of the ACDE Executive Board.

African Union Commission (AUC): ACDE has signed a MoU with the AUC for ACDE to be the implementing agency for ODL in Africa and to help to contribute to the programmes of AUC’s Pan African University using the blended mode.

African Virtual University (AVU): ACDE has also signed a MoU with the AVU which outlines the means of collaboration between the two organisations to promote education and the use of Open, Distance and e-Learning in Africa.

The ACDE has set up a Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agency (ACDE-QAAA) to promote quality and excellence in ODL in Africa. The QAAA was briefly presented by Dr Christine Ofulue of the National Open University of Nigeria. She especially outlined the development of a QA Toolkit by the ACDE-QAAA. The Toolkit was in some way a response by ACDE to a call for QA in ODL by the AUC. The Toolkit has been piloted in some institutions and QA reviewers have also been trained in its use. ACDE-QAAA is also developing an online repository of resources related to QA in ODL.

Discussion

Two main issues were raised during the discussion. First, that although it might appear that there is a dichotomy between provision of higher education by face-to-face and ODL, there should be no difference in the quality of the degree, irrespective of the mode of delivery. Second, that in Nigeria many universities are offering Distance Education programmes with no standardisation or accreditation; there was therefore a need to regulate ODL in Nigeria.

(iii) Europe-Africa Quality Connect

The presentation was made by Ms Tia Loukkola, head of unit at the European University Association (EUA). She first briefly described the EUA, an association of HEIs in Europe which has about 850 members in 47 countries. She then presented the “Europe-Africa Quality Connect: Building Institutional Capacity through Partnership” project, which was a joint undertaking by several organisations, the main ones being EUA and AAU. It was funded by the European Commission Erasmus Mundus Programme. The thrust of the two-year project, which ended in 2012, was to assess and enhance institutional capacity in QA in African universities by using the EUA’s well-established Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP), but adapted to the African context. The IEP methodology does not evaluate an institution on the basis of set external criteria, but rather examines the institution on its own terms and aims to provide developmental recommendations in a supportive way.
Following a call for participation, five African institutions were selected taking geographical distribution into account. Evaluation teams comprising a mixture of European and African experts were set up. A preparatory workshop was held with the five institutions. This was followed by a training workshop for the evaluators. Institutional evaluations were undertaken, requiring two visits to each institution. After the final evaluation reports had been submitted to the five institutions, a post-evaluation workshop and a dissemination conference were held.

There was unanimous appreciation of the process by all the project participants. It was agreed that this evaluation would be complementary to other national QA processes. The main recommendations emanating from the project were:

a) The AAU should establish a programme similar to the IEP in Africa in coordination with regional bodies and national QA agencies.

b) AAU should look for partners to support the programme. Among the partners being considered are the World Bank through its African Centres of Excellence project and CAMES.

c) There was a need to establish a business model for the institutional evaluation, encouraging participating institutions to cover part of the cost.

Discussion

The following are the main points raised during the discussion:

- One participant enquired about the process used for selecting the universities. The speaker explained that there was a public call for participation and, from the applications received, the criteria used were regional representation, size of institution and linguistic diversity.

- One participant commented that achieving Quality enhancement in institutions takes time and enquired whether the institutional evaluation had brought about Quality enhancement. It was reported that the institutions evaluated had reported positive enhancement.

- Another participant expressed the view that there were already different QA systems in operation in Africa and it might be advisable to harmonise these systems before introducing a new European one. The speaker mentioned that it was very difficult to harmonise QA or evaluation systems in any region; Europe has not been able to do so. Also, the proposed evaluation was not entirely European. For example, the IEP in Europe takes into account institutional autonomy but this had been excluded from the African evaluations.

- A Nigerian participant commented that in Nigeria mostly a programme-based approach to QA has been in use but Accreditation has now also been introduced. The proposed institutional evaluation would be welcome in Nigeria. He added that the process used in the evaluation was more important than the final outcome.
The AAU Business Session II was held on Friday 31 May morning and was chaired by Professor George Magoha, Ag. President of AAU.

11.1 Amendments to AAU’s Constitution and Bye-Laws
Several amendments to the AAU Constitution and Bye-Laws were proposed for approval by the Secretary-General. These amendments addressed issues related to: (a) the legal personality of the AAU; (b) use and custody of the official AAU seal; (c) co-option of the Immediate Past President to the Governing Board; (d) the situation when the Secretary General and the President are from the same country; (e) amendments to Bye-Laws; and (f) admission of South Sudan as an independent country.

Legal Personality: The provision for the legal personality of the Association was necessary because, increasingly, it was becoming a requirement for grant negotiations with donors.

Use and Custody of the Official Seal: This provision specified the use and custody of the official seal to prevent its unlawful use and ensure its safety.

Co-option of Immediate Past President to the Board: This amendment made provision for the Immediate Past President of AAU to serve on the Governing Board to ensure continuity.

Secretary-General and President from Same Country: This amendment made provision for the President not to be elected from the country of the current Secretary-General, so as to avoid a situation where both the Secretary General and President were from the same country.

Amendment to Bye-Laws: The proposed amendments to the Bye-Laws were necessary so as to align them with the proposed amendments to the Constitution.

Admission of South Sudan as an Independent Country: To be in line with the African Union’s decision, in the AAU Bye-Laws South Sudan was being added as an independent country in the East African region.

During the ensuing discussion, there was a lengthy debate on the proposal that the President and Secretary-General should not come from the same country. Some members were for while others were against the proposal.

The General Conference finally approved all the proposed amendments unanimously.

However, one member subsequently drew attention to the clause in the Constitution which required the Secretary-General to circulate proposals for amendments to the Constitution three months before the General Conference. The Secretary-General mentioned that this had been done but several members appeared not to have received the proposed changes. The General Conference therefore agreed that the amendments that had been approved be circulated to all members immediately after the General Conference, inviting them for a no-objection response within two weeks. After that date, and if no objections were received, the amendments would be considered as approved.

Following a remark on the poor quality of the French translations of the AAU Constitution and Bye-Laws, a proposal was made that these documents be translated properly again in French. The Secretary-General made an appeal to Francophone institutions to help with the translation. The same plea was made to Arabophone institutions for translating the documents in Arabic.
11.2 Report of the AAU Governing Board to the General Conference

A summary report on the discharge of the statutory functions of the Governing Board was presented to the Conference. The report presented highlights of the 12th General Conference held in 2009 and COREVIP in 2011; Governing Board and Executive Committee Meetings held between 2009 and 2013; Secretariat Operations; appraisal of the AAU’s Core programme (2009–2013); AAU’s Financial Performance; and AAU’s Strategic Plan (2011-2015).

Highlights of the report included the following:

- The recommendations of the 12th General Conference and COREVIP had given pointers on what the Association and its members should emphasise. These included forging partnerships with governments and the private sector; adopting an integrative approach to curricula development that involves industry and other end users; setting up of an endowment fund by the African Union; building ownership in setting of research agenda; adoption of innovative approaches in resource mobilisation; and sensitization on the need for both public and private institutions to adopt Quality Assurance policies. The proceedings of the 12th General Conference had been published and circulated.

- The Governing Board and the Executive Committee held 5 and 3 meetings, respectively. Deliberations focused on AAU finances and programme implementation; admission of 32 new members; and, resignation of the AAU President and appointment of the first Vice-President as the Acting AAU President.

- On Secretariat Operations, the Conference was appraised of leadership change, staff turnover and new appointments. Three Secretary-Generals had been appointed since 2009. Also, seven other professional staff had departed and six new ones appointed. Additionally, the Conference was informed about plans to build a new Secretariat for the Association with financial support from the Government of Ghana and on land donated by the University of Ghana, Legon.

- On implementation of the Core Programme (2009-2013), detailed information on the various programmes executed, activities undertaken and outputs to date were provided. Attention of the Conference was drawn to the fact that the majority of the programmes were ending this year. The Conference also noted that the AAU had assisted in establishing the African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN) as the umbrella agency for national Quality Assurance agencies in Africa. The secretariat of AfriQAN was currently located at the AAU Secretariat in Accra.

- On AAU’s Financial Performance, attention was drawn to the significant subscription arrears in all regions, especially in North Africa, although the total number of members and subscription payments had witnessed an increase over the reporting period. The overall financial situation was not encouraging and required timely subscription payment from all members. The region with the least subscription arrears was Southern Africa. Zimbabwe was commended as all its members were in good standing; similarly, all the private universities in Liberia had paid their dues, in spite of being in a recent post-conflict situation. A plea for subventions from African governments and the African Union was again made. The AAU also needed to diversify its funding sources for running its programmes.

- A five-year Strategic Plan (2011-2015) had been developed. The Plan envisioned the AAU as advocate for higher education in Africa. It had 3 main goals and 7 Key Results Areas (KRA) as follows:
Goal 1: Organizational matters specific to AAU

KRA 1: Strengthening Capacity for Service Delivery at the AAU Secretariat
KRA 2: AAU Membership Size, Quality and Commitment

Goal 2: Capacity to assist and serve member institutions

KRA 1: Strengthened HEIs’ Delivery Capacity in Africa
KRA 2: Knowledge Generation, Management and Dissemination
KRA 3: Community and Student Engagement in HEIs

Goal 3: Capacity to meet broader societal needs

KRA 1: Engagement with African and International Development Partners for Improved Collaboration
KRA 2: Supporting HEIs’ Response to Local and Regional Challenges

The General Conference took note of the Strategic Plan.

11.3 AAU’s Core Programme (2013-2017)

The New Core Programme for the next four-year period (2013–2017) was presented to the Conference. The overall theme of the Core Programme was “Accelerating Human Development in Africa through Higher Education”, and was fashioned after the current AAU Strategic Plan. The programme built on the achievements of the previous programme and introduced innovative programmes under five sub-themes, namely, Strengthening HEIs’ Delivery Capacity in Africa; Promoting Knowledge Generation and Management; Promoting the Socio-economic Relevance of the African University; Networking, Strategic Alliances and Funding Issues; and Miscellaneous and Special Issues.

Under each sub-theme several specific projects were proposed as follows:

1. Strengthening HEIs’ Delivery Capacity in Africa
   a. Enhancing Leadership and Management Capacity in African HEIs (LEDEV & MADEV).
   b. Improving ICT Infrastructure and Capacity for Knowledge Management (RENU)
   c. Improving Quality Assurance in African HEIs
   d. Promoting the African Centre of Excellence

2. Promoting Knowledge Generation and Management
   a. Improving Research Governance in African HEIs
   b. Supporting Policy Relevant Research
   c. Facilitating Academic Staff Mobility
   d. Promoting Scholarships for Doctoral Studies for Staff Development in African HEIs
   e. Increasing Access to African Scholarly Work

3. Promoting the Socio-Economic Relevance of the African University
   a. Improving University-Industry Linkages
   b. Developing the Employable African Graduate
   c. Promoting Human Health: Managing HIV and Other Sexually Transmitted Infections in HEIs and their communities in Africa
   d. Promoting Sustainable Development in Africa
4. Networking, Strategic Alliances and Funding Issues
   a. Inter-University Collaboration in Africa (Twinning African HEIs)
   b. Collaboration with African Sub-Regional HE Associations
   c. Collaboration with International Development Partners
   d. Diaspora and Alumni Relations
   e. Internationalization in African HE

5. Miscellaneous and Special Issues
   a. To cater for programmes on new and emerging issues

The Conference approved the new Core Programme (2013 – 2017).

12.0 PLENARY SESSION IX: GENERAL CONFERENCE REPORT, COMMUNIQUÉ AND ELECTIONS

The Plenary Session IX was held in the afternoon of Friday 31 May and was chaired by Prof. George Magoha, Ag. AAU President.

12.1 General Conference Report
Presenting his Conference Report, the Rapporteur-General of the Conference, Prof. Goolam Mohamedbhai, former Secretary-General of AAU, acknowledged the assistance provided to him by several Assistant Rapporteurs appointed by the AAU. He then presented the outline of Report, covering the Opening Ceremony, the keynote speeches, the two AAU Business Sessions, the Plenary and Parallel Sessions and the meeting of Friends of AAU, highlighting the main points made and issues raised.

The General Conference unanimously adopted the Conference Report.

12.2 Conference Communiqué
A committee had been had set up to draft a Conference Communiqué. The composition of the committee was as follows:

Professor Is-haq Oloyede - Former AAU President, Chair
Professor Etienne Ehouan Ehilé - Representative, AAU
Professor Olugbemiro Jegede - Representative of Western Africa
Dr. Ehmid M. Omar - Representative of Northern Africa
Dr. Kenneth Matengu - Representative of Southern Africa
Professor Tolly Mbwette - Representative of Eastern Africa
Professor Edward Ako - Representative of Central Africa
Mrs. Araba Botchway (AAU) - Secretary to the Committee

Prof. Oloyede presented the Communiqué to the Conference on behalf of the committee. The Communiqué, after a preamble, outlined the main outcomes of the General Conference and then proposed five resolutions and made several recommendations to the AAU and African universities, African governments and non-governmental organisations, and international development partners. The full Communiqué is at Annex II of this report.

The General Conference unanimously adopted the Communiqué.
12.3 Election of President, Vice-Presidents and Members of the Governing Board

Prof. Bruno Bekolo-Ebe, Chairperson of the Elections Committee, presented the proposals of the Committee. He mentioned that the Elections Committee reviewed the nominations received for membership of the Governing Board for the period 2013-2017, including nominations from regional caucuses. In proposing its recommendations to the General Conference, the Elections Committee took the following into consideration: eligibility criteria for candidates; criteria for nominating candidates; regional, linguistic and gender balance; and continuity of the Board. The proposals of the Elections Committee were as follows:

President
Professor Olusola OYEWOLE, University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria (West Africa)

Vice Presidents
Professor Russel BOTMAN, Stellenbosch University, South Africa (Southern Africa)
Professor Karrar Ahmed Bashir ELABBADI, Omdurman Ahlia University, Sudan (East Africa)
Professor Marc-Louis ROPIVIA, Université Omar Bongo, Gabon (Central Africa)

Members

Central Africa
Professor Paul Henri AMVAM ZOLLO, Université de Ngaoundere, Cameroon
Professor AKO EDWARD, Université de Maroua, Cameroon

North Africa
Dr. Mohamed Abdul Karim ALKILANY, Sebha University, Libya

Southern Africa
Professor Lindela NDLOVU, National University of Science & Technology, Zimbabwe
Professor Sharon SIVERTS, National University of Lesotho, Lesotho

Alternate Members:
Professor Orlando Antonio QUILAMBO, University Eduardo Mondlane, Mozambique
Professor Peter MBATI, University of Venda, South Africa

East Africa
Professor Tolly MBWETTE, Open University of Tanzania, Tanzania
Professor John Ssentamu DDUMBA, Makerere University, Uganda

Alternate Members:
Professor Jeilani Abdullah OSMAN, University of Hormuud, Somalia
Professor Dominic W. MAKAWITI, Maseno University, Kenya

West Africa
Professor D. D. KUUPOLE, University of Cape Coast, Ghana
Professor Komi P. TCHAKPELE, Université de Kara, Togo

Alternate Members:
Professor (Mrs.) Comfort EKPO, University of Uyo, Akwan Ibom State, Nigeria
Professor Paul GINIES, 2iE, Ouagadougou

Prof. Bekolo-Ebe drew the attention of the General Conference to the fact that Dr. Mohamed Abdul Karim Alkilany of Sebha University, Libya had been nominated but was not physically present, which was an eligibility criterion. However, as he was the only candidate nominated to represent North Africa on the Board, the Elections Committee was exceptionally recommending acceptance of his candidature.
The General Conference unanimously approved all the recommendations of the Elections Committee by acclamation.

13.0 CLOSING OF THE CONFERENCE

The closing of the General Conference, just like its opening, took place at the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism on Friday 31 May afternoon. The ceremony was presided by the Deputy Minister of Education of Gabon, Mrs. Paulette Moungengué. There were five interventions at the ceremony.

Address by Professor Marc-Louis Ropivia, Rector of Université Omar Bongo

Professor Ropivia, in his address, reminded the audience of the many challenges facing higher education in Africa and Gabon, which needed to be addressed. First, he noted that there is a dominance of humanities graduates over those in science and technology by a ratio of 80:10. The issue then is how to provide the appropriate training to humanities graduates to enable them to obtain a professional, employable qualification. Another challenge is university/industry partnership, which must be considered beyond the issue of graduate employability. Universities must involve industry in undertaking applied research. Other challenges he said are financing of universities and the need for a governance structure that made universitites more responsible and accountable.

The Rector concluded his speech by thanking the various partners such as the World Bank and the AAU; the Gabonese Government, in particular the President of the Republic, the Secretary-General of the President’s Office and the Minister of Education, for all the support provided to UOB to help host the conference. He equally thanked Prof. Pierre Nzizni former Rector of UOB, who had initiated the discussions with AAU for the holding of the Conference in Libreville.

Address by Professor Olusola Oyewole, Newly Elected President of AAU

In his first address as the newly elected President of the Association, Professor Oyewole expressed appreciation to the immediate Past Acting President, Professor George Magoha, for his great service to the AAU over the past eight years. He also thanked the two former Vice-Presidents and members of the Governing Board, recognising in particular the immense contribution of Professor Jane Naana Opoku Agyemang, past Board Member and currently Minister of Education of Ghana. The Government of Ghana was also recognised for its contribution to the AAU over the years.

Professor Oyewole observed that the 13th Conference was very successful and praised His Excellency the President of Gabon for his immense support. He also commended Professor Etienne Ehilé, the AAU Secretary-General, and his staff for a well-organised conference.

Referring to his election as President of the AAU, Professor Oyewole promised to follow through the decisions of the previous Governing Board, including the construction of the new Secretariat and the creation of directorates at the Secretariat. He noted that while employed at the AAU, it had always been his wish that the Secretariat would have its own premises. He was therefore happy that the lot had fallen on him to oversee the realisation of this dream. Professor Oyewole also thanked the conference participants for electing him to the high office of President and assured both AAU members and funding partners of his commitment to promoting higher education on the continent to ensure graduate employability.

Address by Professor Etienne Ehilé, Secretary-General of AAU
The Secretary-General observed that the four-day conference had been hectic but very fruitful. He, too, thanked the President of Gabon for accepting to host the event and making available the necessary support. Professor Ehilé also expressed appreciation for the support of funding partners, the Minister for Education of Gabon, and the immediate past Rector of UOB, Prof. Pierre Nzinzi, whose contribution ensured the success of the conference. The contributions of the UOB Local Organising Committee, the IT support personnel, the management and staff of Hotel Okoumé Palace, (venue for the conference) and the interpreters were also acknowledged.

Professor Ehilé welcomed the new President and Governing Board, pledging to work together with them to move the Association forward. He reiterated his appreciation to the Government of Ghana for its continuous support. Professor Ehilé mentioned the exemplary performance of Ghanaian universities in the payment of their AAU subscriptions and called on other member institutions to emulate this.

Ending his address, Professor Ehilé called for the active participation of all members in AAU’s programmes. He wished participants a safe journey back to their respective destinations and all the best in their endeavours.

Address by Professor George Magoha, Immediate Past Acting President of AAU

Professor Magoha mentioned that one of challenges facing the AAU was what impact it had on the continent. He observed that in view of the total number of African higher education institutions, the AAU’s membership count was not encouraging. While the attendance at this Conference was good, especially the attendance of Francophone universities, attendance by Arabophone universities was disappointing.

Professor Magoha reminded all that the theme for the conference was still relevant and called on the new AAU Board to continue debating the issue and suggesting solutions to it. He decried the situation in Africa where the number of PhD graduates produced was relatively low and the majority of them siphoned off the continent through brain drain. He called on the AAU to address the issue of how to retain scholars produced in Africa on the continent.

Addressing the new Governing Board, Professor Magoha advised that the members set performance targets to monitor their achievements and to keep them on course.

Like the speakers before him, Professor Magoha applauded the Government of Gabon and credited the success of the conference to the financial support it had provided. He specially thanked Professors Ropivia and Nzinzi of UOB for hosting the Conference.

Closing Speech by Mrs Paulette Moungengui, Deputy Minister of Education of Gabon

The Deputy Minister, in her closing address, emphasised the relevance of the theme of graduate employability for both Africa and Gabon. She recalled the commitment of the President of the Republic of Gabon to make training a lever of development, based in particular on the strengthening of the public/private partnership and the promotion of self-employment. She also recalled the challenges of the African universities: lack of infrastructure, shortage of staff and inadequate funding, all of which have an impact on the economic and social development of the African continent.

Before declaring the Conference closed, she undertook to provide a faithful report of the outcome of the Conference to the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister, and to ensure follow-up of the recommendations.
“Transforming African Higher Education for Graduate Employability and Socio-Economic Development”

The connect between higher education and socio-economic development of any country is now unquestionable. Such a link is all the more relevant for Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), which faces enormous development challenges. Higher education can contribute to development by producing graduates who have the requisite skills, who can produce and adapt knowledge innovatively and who can address human and social development challenges.

Student enrolment, and hence output of graduates, for SSA is known to be the lowest than any other world region. Yet, in spite of many constraints and challenges, higher education institutions (HEIs) in Africa have made enormous efforts to cater for the growing demand for higher education and have increased their enrolment significantly, in many cases by several folds over just one decade. These efforts will have to be sustained to enable African countries to move up along their development trajectory.

Increase in enrolment and consequently in output of graduates, however, must be cautiously planned, taking into account economic and social factors. At a time when much of the developed world is facing economic crisis, Africa is currently one of the fastest growing regions in the world, and this growth is expected to be maintained over the next few years. However, in almost all African countries unemployment is high. Statistics reveal that while Africa has the world’s youngest population, with great expectations for education, nearly 60% of those who are unemployed are youth between the ages of 15-24, and a significant number of these are graduates. This jobless growth is what African HEIs will have to take into consideration in planning their future expansion. The social and political consequences of large unemployment can be grave, as evidenced by what is now known as the ‘Arab spring’. Indeed, two important factors that triggered the explosive unrest in Morocco, which was followed in other parts of the Arab world, were high proportions of young people and high unemployment among the educated youth.

It is therefore clear that merely increasing enrolment and output of graduates will not be sufficient for a positive impact on development; it must be ensured that the graduates are productively employed or can be self-employed to generate further employment. At a time when enormous efforts are being made to revitalise higher education in Africa, graduate employment and employability – two closely related but not synonymous terms – are important elements that must be factored in.

For any HEI the factors affecting graduate employment and employability can perhaps be grouped into three categories: first, exogenous factors related to the absorptive capacity of the country for graduates, which has an impact on graduate employment; second, endogenous factors associated to the institution’s efforts in ensuring the well-preparedness of the graduates, which determines their employability; and third, factors linking the exogenous and endogenous factors, in other words linking employment and employability. Some of the issues surrounding these factors are considered in the sub-themes that follow.
Socio-Political Environment and Employability

All the indicators show that, of all the world’s regions, SSA is the worst in terms of human and social development. In most of the countries in SSA, the Millennium Development Goals will not be fully achieved by the due date of 2015. In transforming HEIs in Africa, therefore, their role in meeting the continent’s human and social development challenges cannot be ignored. HEIs in Africa have a responsibility to ensure that their students are sensitised to the continent’s myriad development challenges, and that their graduates, on leaving the institutions, not only find meaningful employment according to their skills, but are equally equipped in creating an informed and engaged citizenry, one that promotes sustainable development, multi-cultural understanding, tolerance and peace.

Over 60% of the population of SSA currently lives in rural areas, where poverty is at its extreme and where the main development challenges are found. Agriculture is the main rural activity. Unfortunately, agricultural departments of most HEIs focus on production agriculture – mainly crop and animal production; very few deal with the problem of rural development and food security. Agriculture graduates tend to seek employment in the urban rather than the rural areas, which results in high graduate unemployment. As a result, many HEIs are under pressure to merge their agricultural education activities with other scientific disciplines, thus further limiting the scope of promoting rural development. Agricultural institutions in Africa need to re-focus their teaching activities to the needs of rural communities.

The emphasis on rural development should be mainstreamed in all areas of higher education. At present most of the curricula in the professional areas, such as engineering and health, are geared towards the graduates working in an urban environment; it is not surprising therefore that few graduates are prepared to practice in rural areas. Many graduates who are unable to get employment in the urban areas decide to emigrate. Engineering students, for example, should be made aware of rural technological traditions and innovations and medical students should be familiarised with traditional medicine and trained to practice in an environment where advanced technological equipment is not available. More generally, universities in Africa need to redefine their role in terms of their engagement towards rural development. Africa’s economic and technological development requires not just graduates from universities but also diploma and certificate holders from post-secondary institutions such as polytechnics, technical colleges, professional schools, etc. In fact the outputs from the latter institutions are more employable than those from universities. Unfortunately, in order to meet the increasing demand for higher education, new universities are created or existing polytechnics and post-secondary institutions are converted into universities. Such decisions are often politically motivated. This partly explains the current graduate unemployment situation in Africa, which may well worsen in the future. The need for differentiation in higher education systems in Africa, accompanied by a valorisation of technical and vocational education, is crucial.

Graduate Employability

HEIs need to run programmes that are relevant to their country’s needs and to provide the necessary skills to their students to facilitate their eventual employment. However, there appears to be a mismatch between the educational provisions in Africa and the needs of the labour market, resulting in significant graduate unemployment. There are reports from many African countries that graduates end up underemployed or employed in areas which they were not trained in. HEIs have to be responsive to labour market demands and provide the necessary competencies and skills to their students to make them employable.

In Africa, national manpower planning, where it exists, is not always up to date and in any case, because of the continuously evolving economic situation, may not always be a reliable source of information for institutions to plan their programmes. Informal feedback from employers and on tracer studies of alumni, where these are carried out, can be more useful. But it is very often the
number of applications received for a programme that determines its relevance, and this is particularly true for private HEIs. Besides the relevance of the programmes, their quality is also a determining factor in employability. African higher education institutions are still in the process of assuring the quality of their programmes and, as a result, graduates from abroad tend to be favoured for employment.

Good academic qualifications, however, are not enough for employability. Graduates need to also have other attributes and competencies often referred to as ‘soft’ skills. Indeed, many employers give greater importance to soft skills than qualifications. These skills include communication skills, analytical and problem-solving skills, team spirit, creativity and adaptability. It is important for HEIs to embed these skills in their course provisions.

Two further important issues need to be considered by HEIs with respect to employability. First, the constantly evolving employment situation in Africa means that graduates can no longer expect to be employed in just one sector throughout their professional life. They will need to be imparted with skills that enable them to adapt to different situations as they move from one job to another. Second, students need to be made aware that they will operate in an increasingly globalised world, and that globalisation will affect their work and life. They will have to learn to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by globalisation but at the same time be aware of its possible negative consequences.

Opportunities for employment are becoming limited in many African countries. In such cases, training students to become entrepreneurs after graduating can be very useful to the economy, especially as the graduates then become job providers rather than job seekers. HEIs should integrate entrepreneurship training in their programmes or mount special entrepreneurship courses.

Two activities that have been found to increase employability of graduates are work placement and extra-curricular activities. Many professional programmes include a short internship in business or industry, but this needs to be extended to all programmes. Participation in sports, debating competitions, student union’s activities or community service also enhances the soft skills of graduates.

Finally, HEIs should assist their students in their job-seeking activities through a dedicated unit. These could comprise assisting students in preparing applications for jobs and familiarisation with interview techniques, providing guidance on possible careers and arranging ‘job fairs’ where potential employers are invited on campus to recruit graduates. The same unit could provide support to the institution’s alumni association through which the employment situation of the graduates can be gauged.

**Connect Between Higher Education and the Productive Sector**

Linkages between universities and the productive sector, taken in its wider sense, can be enormously helpful in facilitating the employment of graduates.

First, advice from representatives of business and industry on the curricula can help to make the programmes of HEIs more relevant to the needs of the productive sector. This is commonly done and is at times mandatory for professional programmes such as engineering, medicine and accountancy, but should be extended to other fields as well.

Second, business and industry can provide attachments to students. This is common in engineering, for example, where the internship period can be for as long as one year, sandwiched within the programme. But even a short vocational attachment of a few weeks can be hugely beneficial to the students as it provides them with exposure to the world of work. This is also an opportunity for industry to gauge the potential of the student as an employee. Those HEIs which regularly place their
students on industry attachments have found that many of their students obtain employment in the firm where they were placed on attachment. In certain areas, for example engineering, faculty can also be seconded to industry for a short period to obtain practical experience and this makes their teaching more relevant to the needs of industry.

Third, professionals from business and industry can be used as adjunct faculty. Not only does this make up for the acute shortage of faculty in most HEIs but it also helps students to be exposed to the practical aspects of their studies, and provides them with a direct contact with industry. Leading business and industry professionals can also be invited as guest speakers to provide information on the latest business and industrial developments and challenges of the country.

A scoping study on university-industry linkages in Africa was undertaken in 2010 by the Association of African Universities in partnership with the Association of Universities and Colleges in Canada. The results of the study, which involved 133 African universities, showed that universities had taken initial steps to create or deepen linkages with the productive sector but they faced several challenges such as lack of policy, know-how, qualified personnel, infrastructure and funding.

The International Institute for Water and Engineering (2iE) located in Burkina Faso is an excellent example of how linkages with industry can improve employability. It has established 27 formal partnerships with various companies and institutions and created a technology incubator to help students launch their own innovative businesses, with the result that over 90% of its graduates find employment within six months of completing their studies.

The Role of Organised Private Sector

Public HEIs, existing and new ones to come, will never be able to cope with the huge demand for higher education in Africa. Private HEIs have an important role to play. Currently the number of private HEIs already exceeds the number of public ones in Africa, although their student enrolment is lower than in public HEIs. Private HEIs tend to run programmes that are directly relevant to labour market needs, but the quality of their programmes often leaves much to be desired so that their graduates frequently experience difficulty in getting employed. For private HEIs to play the important role of complementing and supplementing public higher education, it must be ensured that their educational provision is of quality.

A few decades ago the bulk of graduates in Africa would find employment in the public sector. Now, the private sector offers greater opportunities for graduate employment and is the main beneficiary. Yet, private sector funding to higher education is negligible. The private sector must fund higher education as part of its social responsibility and it is incumbent on governments to provide appropriate financial incentives to encourage it to do so.

A major constraint for graduates in finding employment is that they do not have any work experience; but such experience can only be obtained after having been employed. The private sector can assist in providing company-based training to fresh graduates for a couple of years to enhance their business skills and provide them with valuable work experience. Although a particular company may not employ all the graduates at the end of the training period, it would have greatly helped them to become more employable. To make such a scheme effective, government should provide some support and incentive.

An interesting example of how the private sector can mobilise itself to promote graduate recruitment is the South African Graduate Recruiters Association (SAGRA), which comprises 230 members across 130 organisations in South Africa and which is dedicated to advancing graduate recruitment among its members through workshops, publications and surveys. Similar initiatives should be taken in other African countries.
Funding Issues

An important factor taken into account by employers in employing graduates is the quality of the degree and therefore of the institution awarding it. Because of increasing enrolment and decreasing government funding, public HEIs in Africa face major challenges in improving their quality. Improving the quality of HEIs in Africa is therefore a priority. Public HEIs will have to find innovative ways of generating income to supplement government funding in order to improve the quality of their education. Governments, too, can implement novel ideas for raising funds nationally in order, for example, to support infrastructural development in HEIs. Putting in place Quality Assurance systems, nationally and institutionally, to improve quality also requires funding and this is clearly the responsibility of governments.

Many African countries have successfully introduced cost-sharing measures by charging tuition fees to students in public HEIs but this remains a contentious issue in many other countries. There is no doubt that most countries will eventually have to resort to introducing some form of cost-sharing measures in public HEIs in order to fund increased enrolment and improved quality. One positive aspect of cost-sharing is that students will then insist on getting ‘value for money’ for their education. If graduates are subsequently unable to find employment, they would be unable to pay back any loans they may have taken, which will have a negative impact on both the HEIs and governments. This will drive HEIs to ensuring the quality and relevance of their educational provision.

Efforts by HEIs to impart entrepreneurship skills in graduates must be supported by appropriate financial incentives by governments to facilitate new graduates to start their own businesses. These could take the form of providing seed capital or low-interest loans to the graduates.

Undertaking regular and updated manpower planning as well as carrying out graduate tracer studies nationally can be immensely helpful in gauging the labour market demand and the employment of graduates. The information can then be used to provide career guidance and advice to students seeking to enter higher education. These, however, are costly exercises and need to be adequately funded.

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1.0 PREAMBLE

1.1 The Association of African Universities (AAU) in collaboration with the Université Omar Bongo, Libreville, Gabon, held its 13th General Conference on the theme “Transforming African Higher Education for Graduate Employability and Socio-Economic Development” from May 28 to 31, 2013 at Hotel Okoumé Palace, Libreville, Gabon.

1.2 The General Conference, which meets every four years, is the apex authority of the Association responsible for policy formulation and overseeing the Conference of Vice-Chancellors, Rectors and Principals (COREVIP) of all its member institutions.

1.3 The General Conference was attended by about 300 delegates from 30 African countries including Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo Brazzaville, Côte D'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Libya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Somalia, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Nine (9) Ministers, including Ghana’s Minister of Education, attended the General Conference. The distribution of attendance by region was as follows: Central Africa (109), West Africa (96), Southern Africa (38), Eastern Africa (29) and Northern Africa (20).

1.4 In addition to the presence of member and associate institutions, education policy makers and observers admitted by AAU’s Governing Board, several International Development Partners, including AAU’s traditional partners and funding agencies, also attended. These included ACBF, the World Bank, ADEA, ACDE, CASE, and HED.

1.5 The main objective of the General Conference was to examine the disturbing issue of graduate employability which is confronting African countries to a greater extent than had been perceived, and to develop strategies for higher education institutions that will facilitate self-reforms needed to tackle this growing menace. Another objective was to dialogue with governments and international development partners in order to share knowledge and collaboratively negotiate and proffer models and solutions to stem the rising tide of graduate unemployment on the continent of Africa.

1.6 The official opening of the General Conference was performed by His Excellency Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of Gabon, who was ably represented by Dr Seraphin Madounga, Minister of Education, Scientific Research, Youth and Sports. President Ondimba charged African tertiary institutions to ensure they produce graduates that appropriately and effectively meet the needs of labour markets as well as address Africa’s developmental challenges in the context of a globalized competitive economy.

1.7 Several goodwill messages were presented by partners of the AAU. Professor Marc-Louis Ropivia, Rector of the University of Omar Bongo, in a welcome address to the conference, informed delegates about steps being taken in Gabon to enhance graduate employability within a National Strategic Plan with three pillars of a green, industrialized and service-oriented Gabon. The Secretary General of AAU, Professor Etienne Ehouan Ehilé, who took over from Professor Olugbemiro Jegede about 9 months ago, called upon African tertiary institutions to

ANNEX II: CONFERENCE COMMUNIQUE
engage in some radical innovation in order to live up to their expected new role in the 21st century global knowledge economy.

1.8 “African Higher Education for Graduate Employability and Socio-Economic Development” which was discussed within an open platform, had a total of nine (9) plenary sessions, three working group discussions, and two AAU business sessions. Other presentations were held to focus on the theme of the conference through the following five (5) sub-themes:

1.8.1 The connect between higher education and the productive sector.
1.8.2 Graduate employability.
1.8.3 The role of the organised private sector.
1.8.4 Socio-political environment and employability.
1.8.5 Funding issues.

2.0 OUTCOMES OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

Participants at the General Conference:

2.1 Reaffirmed:

2.1.1 education as the right of every citizen and as a public good;
2.1.2 education as the key instrument of change and development in any society;
2.1.3 the 21st Century as a knowledge-driven century;
2.1.4 higher education as a major determinant and source for graduate employability in Africa;
2.1.5 higher education must equip graduates with skills, attitude and knowledge needed for graduate employability by various agencies and organisation and for graduates becoming self-employed and also as employers of labour themselves;
2.1.6 that in order to solidly build a strong foundation for societal development, higher education in Africa must ensure collaboration and partnership, rather than competition amongst institutions of higher learning, the Organised Private Sectors and International Development Partners.

2.2 Observed:

i. the phenomenal growth of universities on the continent in recent times to expand access to higher education;
ii. the increasing and disturbing rise in graduate unemployment of graduates in Africa;
iii. that Africa has issues with underemployment, unemployment and unemployability requiring diverse and effective ways to combat them;
iv. that higher education curricula appear not to be in resonance and consonance with the prevailing requirements of the 21st century employment markets;
v. the increasing need for institutional collaboration and partnerships for educational resource sharing, pooling of academic talent and enhancing economies of scale toward graduate employability.

2.3 Noted:

i. the low level of employment of graduates in Africa;
ii. the low level of attentions by governments, universities and Organised Private Sectors to confront the issue of unemployment;
iii. the low output and the completion rates in some areas of academic programmes in African universities;
iv. the need for more research on areas that make major contribution to development in Africa and also make massive use of graduates produced by its Universities;
v. the focus of the Arusha Convention which specifies the harmonization of qualifications and employment and research and postgraduate opportunities amongst the various regions of the continent with a view to enhancing employability;
vi. the social and political factors that adversely affect employability;

2.4 Commended:
i. the World Bank in their paradigm shift from placing emphasis on basic education to placing premium on higher education;
ii. the World Bank on the establishment of the African Centres of Excellence Project within Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), Health Sciences and Agricultural Sciences; and setting aside US$8 million in each of the 15 Centres in the Phase 1 of the project in West and Central Africa;
iii. the few African governments which had provided up to 30 per cent of their annual budget for education;
iv. the few African countries that had made giant strides in higher education and entrenching quality assurance systems to ensure good production of graduates relevant to the employment market.

2.5 Agreed on:
i. a multi-layered and targeted advocacy with different audiences;
ii. the need to adequately address the social and political factors to ensure employability;
iii. universities in Africa to look inward for effective practices in stemming graduate unemployability;
iv. managing universities in order to ensure the use of appropriate attributes that make a graduate succeed and fit into the work force;
v. meeting and enhancing the demand for skills required for graduate employability in Africa;
vi. building a strong research culture in African universities given its complementary role in developing the teaching and learning environment and;
vii. ensuring the use of international benchmarks in African universities to produce graduates for the labour market.

3.0 CONCLUSION

3.1 Following from the above, the General Conference participants enthused with the achievements of higher education in Africa in the last decade and the pragmatic effort of Governments of African countries to continue to support higher education, and especially the search for practical solutions to stemming unemployment of youths and graduates in Africa.

3.2 Resolved to:
i. evolve and engage every available means that could provide effective solutions to graduate employability and transform higher education in Africa;
ii. insist on implementation of relevant government policies by government agencies and personnel;
iii. encourage networking and partnership amongst universities, with the Organised Private Sector and other stakeholders in the search for solutions to graduate employability;
iv. advise various African governments on the advantage in deepening of the democratization process to engender development and to insist upon transparency in elections and judicial system;
v. create synergy between the universities, NGOs and universities in the mobilisation of social capital so that all stakeholders are involved in the regular review of the curricula to respond to changes in the job market.

3.3 **Recommended the following as panacea for employment of graduates in Africa:**

**AAU and African Universities**

3.3.1 The process of transforming the African higher education for graduate employability should be a collaborative effort amongst universities, governments and the Organised Private Sector.

3.3.2 AAU should commence an aggressive capacity building and advocacy on database on employment opportunities through regional and sub-regional organisations, as other continental associations and organisations.

3.3.3 African Universities should pay serious and strategic attention to relevant curricula, teaching and research to ensure graduate employability. A good example is that of the 2iE, where over 95% of their graduates are recruited within six months after graduation.

3.3.4 African Universities, using all the resources at their disposal, must engage in socially responsive research-backed activities to make the need of our society the centre of activities by universities.

3.3.5 Universities must devise deliberate intervention activities in the total life of their institution to focus on graduate employability.

3.3.6 Universities should diversify their funding sources and encourage shared search for funding by creating networks of institutions with common agenda for research, teaching and learning.

3.3.7 Universities should be accountable through the public presentation of reports of their activities, and be transparent in the management and allocation of resources.

**African Governments**

3.3.8 African Heads of Government should declare the next decade as one to address in a concerted effort and comprehensively deal with unemployment of graduates in Africa.

3.3.9 African governments should draw more from local researchers as Consultants who can plough back their local knowledge in the knowledge generation activities of universities to aid and enhance employability of graduates.

3.3.10 African governments, with the assistance of international development partners, should seek to promote and advocate open and distance learning, e-learning and
online learning and instruction as the future response to massification and on the job training and further training of graduates.

3.3.11 Stakeholders in African higher education should ensure that, in the selection of leadership and management of universities, meritocracy should be the prime driving factor.

3.3.12 African governments should invest in higher education institutions by increasing substantially their financial commitment to them.

Non-Governmental Organisations and International Development Partners

3.3.13 Funding agencies and the International Development Partners should consult adequately with African universities in the setting of African development agenda.

3.3.14 Curricula should be constantly reviewed to ensure relevance to the needs of industry, the global environment and immediate and remote societies.

3.3.15 Non-Governmental Organisations and International Development Partners should pursue and encourage strategies of mutual benefit that will promote sustainable relationships in the implementation of their support for African countries and universities as graduate employability is being tackled.

3.3.16 Youth employment should be addressed through functional, adaptable and ethical education which places emphasis on self-worth, respect and high motivation.

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# ANNEX VI: MEMBERSHIP ISSUES

**AAU Members Admitted Between COREVIP 2011 and General Conference 2013**

## 1. FULL MEMBERS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date Admitted</th>
<th>Governing Board Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecole Supérieure de Statistique et d’Economie Appliquée (ENSSEA)</td>
<td>ALGERIA</td>
<td>31 May, 2012</td>
<td>70th</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presbyterian University College</td>
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<td>26 May, 2013</td>
<td>71st</td>
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<td>Regent University College of Science and Technology</td>
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<td>Catholic University of Mozambique</td>
<td>MOZAMBIQUE</td>
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<td>Ibrahim Badamasi Babangida University, Lapai</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sudan International University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecole Normale Supérieure De Nouakchott</td>
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<tr>
<td>Groupe Institut Supérieur de Commerce et d'Administration des Entreprises (Group ISCAE)</td>
<td>MOROCCO</td>
<td>“”</td>
<td>“”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institut de Formation Aux Carrières de Santé (IFCS)</td>
<td>MOROCCO</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botho University</td>
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<td>Université Catholique du Congo</td>
<td>CONGO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plasma University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Instituto Superior Politecnico de Tecnologias</td>
<td>ANGOLA</td>
<td>“”</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Date Admitted</th>
<th>Governing Board Meeting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Universidade Kimpa Vita</td>
<td>ANGOLA</td>
<td>31 May, 2012</td>
<td>70th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Ecole Supérieure Polytechnique d’Antsiranana</td>
<td>MADAGASCAR</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Landmark University</td>
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<td>4 Simad University</td>
<td>SOMALIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Peace University</td>
<td>SUDAN</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 The Future University</td>
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<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>7 Euclid University</td>
<td>CENTRAL AFRICAN REP.</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 Université de Maradi</td>
<td>NIGER</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 Université de Zinder</td>
<td>NIGER</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 University of Makeni</td>
<td>SIERRA LEONE</td>
<td>&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 University of Hormuud</td>
<td>SOMALIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>12 Covenant University</td>
<td>NIGERIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Southern African Nazarene University</td>
<td>SWAZILAND</td>
<td>26 May, 2013</td>
<td>71st</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Institut Universitaire d’Abidjan (IUA)</td>
<td>CÔTE D’IVOIRE</td>
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</tr>
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Ritva Reinikka, Director for Human Development, Africa Region, World Bank

INTRODUCTION

Honourable Ministers, Mr.Secretary-General, Vice-Chancellors, Deans, esteemed professors, colleagues, partners, and friends; good morning to you, and thank you very much for inviting me here today to this exciting event.

My name is Ritva Reinikka, and I am the Director for Human Development for Sub-Saharan Africa at the World Bank. Human Development as we define it covers education, health, and social protection - sectors that are critical for Africa’s progress because they build and protect human capital.

Our World Bank Vice-President for Africa, Makhtar Diop, is a true champion of higher education. While he unfortunately could not be here with us today due to another commitment, he has sent a video message which we will now play for you.

Video Recorded Address by Mr Makhtar Diop, Vice-President, Africa Region, World Bank

Mr. Secretary-General, Vice-Chancellors, Deans, Professors and all honoured officials and guests, many thanks for the opportunity to address you.

Higher education is one of my key priorities as World Bank Vice President for Africa, and I would have loved to be there to interact directly with you. Higher education is a priority because it holds the potential to be absolutely transformative in Africa. I'm committed to putting resources into our portfolio for the World Bank to support your vision as leaders of universities.

Already, we are supporting the Africa Centres of Excellence initiative. In Ouagadougou, in Abuja, we are trying to support an effort to gather all the knowledge existing in our continent in a specific area and make it a centre of excellence. Through a competitive process, we are making resources available to universities which are articulating a convincing plan, which can mobilize not only internal resources but resources from the private sector and also the public sector.

This is a vision that I think is totally aligned with what we want to do today and what you leaders of African universities are trying to do.

Science is central in everything. There is no part of the world which has been able to sustain a high level of growth, a high level of productivity, without increasing the access to science in a society. Africa, unfortunately, has been lagging behind. That's why in our effort to expand the role of higher education, we are trying to put a particular emphasis on science and technology.

In that context, we have been discussing with different partners in emerging economies that have been able to sustain a high growth rate to see how they've been doing it in their countries and to see how it can be relevant to our work with you in Africa. We are convinced that by transforming higher education in Africa, we'll be able to compete easily with the rest of the world in areas where usually we are not seen as being strong competitors.
So, I would like to thank all of you for the leadership. I want to assure you that the World Bank, financially and intellectually, will be one of your partners and try to put back the higher education agenda in the policy dialogue with our countries.

Thank you very much.

MAIN REMARKS

So that was our Regional Vice-President for Africa, Makhtar Diop, emphasizing the World Bank’s commitment to higher education in Africa.

A call for higher education improvements

Let me now elaborate a little bit, starting from one of the main points that Regional Vice President Diop made on the role of science and technology capacity in addressing Africa’s development challenges.

Nowhere is the role of science and technology more evident than in agriculture and food security. As we have seen in country after country, advances in agricultural science and technology have facilitated higher yields, greater efficiency, and superior nutritional content in the world’s food supply. Advances in scientific knowledge and its application are also leading to longer and healthier lives for many people in developed and developing countries. In Africa ICT and especially the mobile phone are changing almost everything. At the same time, more technicians and engineers would help increase productivity even further.

Some of today’s most pressing challenges, such as inadequate fresh water, or environmental degradation, say, in the Sahel, call for new technologies to be developed and adapted to the needs of Africa. On another important front, people desperately need access to affordable energy. No economy can prosper without energy, so it is clear that more research and skills are needed to find new, environmentally and socially sustainable technologies that can meet these needs.

Yet, today in West Africa, for example, only 10 to 20 percent of students in higher education, depending on the country, are in natural sciences and engineering, while the vast majority has enrolled in arts and social sciences. This needs to change dramatically.

The Change Agenda in Higher Education

Africa’s higher education institutions are critically positioned to ensure that graduates acquire the skills that are in short supply today and can help place their economies on a sustainable growth trajectory.

In many African countries, higher education institutions are often the only places with sufficient concentration of knowledge, research capacity and diverse expertise to generate, absorb and adapt new knowledge.

The East Asian Tigers owe much of their success to timely investments in higher education and science and technological capacity. So in my mind, there is no question that universities have a unique role when it comes to taking Africa to the next level.

But this requires a new approach to higher education – it cannot be business as usual.
We consider the following five key areas within higher education that need to change to meet the continent’s development challenges:

First, quality and standards need to be raised in universities. Africa’s higher education institutions need to make it into the global top 500 rankings. This requires investment in higher education and research, and being able to retain Africa’s top talent in Africa. It also involves higher expectations, international accreditation, and willingness to compete at a global level.

Second, graduates must have knowledge that can be used to meet the continent’s specific needs. As some of the speakers yesterday mentioned, if courses are not very relevant to today’s needs and do not offer hands-on competencies and work place learning, we may well be preparing Africa’s best talent for unemployment. For example, why should Gabon not develop a regional hub today for education and research on oil and gas exploration and management – just like Norway did in the 1980s. Today Norway not only exports oil but also oil extraction technology and offshore services.

Third, better governance of academic institutions is fundamental. We should focus more on a transparent system of governance, where merit is the main consideration while filling key academic and academic leadership positions.

Fourth, both public and private institutions have substantial roles to play. Let us support private institutions to expand in areas where families are willing and able to pay. For example, in Malaysia MBAs and many professional degrees are overwhelmingly provided by the private sector and financed by households. Let us target public funding to families who cannot afford to pay as well as to subject areas with lower private return but that are critical to development, such as natural sciences.

Finally, we need a practical, fair and affordable way to increase investment in higher education. While access to higher education is growing very fast, 2010 figures show that only 7 percent of the relevant age group in Africa is enrolled in university—compared to 17 percent in South Asia and 29 percent in East Asia, and a global average of 30 percent. With a few exceptions, the current financing model in Africa relies primarily on public investment. There is no way to finance the massive expansion that Africa needs with public funds alone. Across the world, governments alone have not been able to expand and finance high-quality higher education successfully. Governments in Africa are already spending about 20 percent of their education budgets on higher education. But wealthier households will need to contribute in a substantial way to the cost of higher education. Soft loans and grants should be targeted to low-income students, so that nobody is turned away for lack of ability to pay.

So, in brief, the change agenda for higher education in Africa should essentially focus on setting higher standards, improving relevance to the countries’ development needs, institutional governance, enabling the private institutions to expand, and on increasing investment, including households.

Obviously countries and institutions face a diverse set of challenges. What works in the University of Nairobi, where I spent a lot of time in the early 1990s as a young economics student, will not necessarily work in the Fourah Bay in Sierra Leone, Africa’s oldest college, which I was delighted to visit last year. Policies must be appropriate to each country and each institution. Most importantly policies must be acceptable to students, faculty and institutions to be successful. Therefore, policy changes have to be gradual, predictable and discussed within societies before being implemented.

Role of the World Bank

Coming now to the role of the World Bank as a partner in education in Africa, let me start by saying that we have seen dramatic improvements in basic education, especially in terms of getting more children into school, and this is very good news. In fact Africa is improving access to basic education
nearly as fast as South Korea did at a similar expansion phase. We have been proud to support “Education for All” in Africa. But we also need to pay attention to the quality of basic education or “Learning for All” and primary completion rates. Needless to say, a child cannot become an engineer if he or she has not acquired the foundational skills needed to progress to secondary school and beyond. So much more remains to be done.

Alongside the basic education agenda, I am proud to say that the World Bank is the biggest contributor to higher education institutions in Africa with close to 100 million dollars invested in this area in 2011 alone. Not including scholarships, this is nearly 40 percent of all development-partner funding to higher education institutions in Africa.

Currently our funding goes to institutions across the continent, in Uganda, Nigeria, Senegal, Tanzania, and Mozambique. We also provide technical support to DRC, Sierra Leone, Liberia, South Sudan and Botswana.

Vice President Makhtar Diop briefly referred to our newest effort to support African higher education – the Africa Centres of Excellence initiative.

Together with the governments of West and Central Africa and with the Association of African Universities, we will launch a call for proposals in the coming months to competitively select up to 15 Africa Centres of Excellence in West and Central Africa. Each centre could receive up to 8 million dollars to become the top institution to attract and educate African talent and conduct research, together with private sector, within a critical area for the continent’s development.

If requested, the World Bank is willing to roll out a similar Africa Centres of Excellence project in Eastern and Southern Africa. We see this as a fantastic opportunity for a partnership with the top African faculty and institutions to together break new ground.

**Conclusion**

Let me conclude my remarks by noting that the time has never been more ripe to focus on education as the continent gears up to meet the needs of a burgeoning population of young people with fresh aspirations and expectations. These young people will fuel Africa’s growth and prosperity, and help bring about a demographic dividend in their countries—but only if they are well equipped to do so. We cannot fail them.

On this note of commitment, I would like to thank the Association of African Universities, and the Secretary General and his team for organizing this important event and most importantly thank all of you for being here, and committing to make higher education a more powerful tool for Africa’s development.

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