

Arusha Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in Africa



Regional Convention on the recognition of studies, certificates, diplomas, degrees and other academic qualifications in Higher Education in African States

*adopted at Arusha on 5 December 1981
revised at Cape Town on 12 June 2002*

presented by COL and UNESCO at the:

UNESCO Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States

(MINEDAF VIII)

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

2 - 6 December 2002

Background (UNESCO news release):

The regional convention on the recognition of higher education studies and degrees in Africa was adopted on 5 December 1981 in Arusha, Tanzania, with a view to promoting regional co-operation through the academic mobility of lecturers and students.

The Arusha Convention is a framework agreement which provides general guidelines meant to facilitate the implementation of regional co-operation relative to the recognition of studies and degrees through national, bilateral, sub-regional and regional mechanisms that exist or are created for that purpose.

Like other regional conventions, the Arusha convention relates to academic recognition for the pursuance of studies and recognition for the exercise of a professional activity. Academic recognition covers three types of qualifications:

- qualifications providing access to higher education

- recognition of partial studies
- recognition of complete phases in higher studies.

The convention is implemented at three different levels:

- at the national level, by the national commissions for the recognition of studies and degrees
- at the sub-regional level, by sub-regional organs like the African and Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES) and the technical committee of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)
- at the regional level, by the regional committee in charge of implementing the Arusha Convention. This committee comprises twenty members representing 19 African States which have already ratified the convention and the Holy See. The secretariat of the regional committee is responsible for ensuring the unity of higher education at the UNESCO regional office for Education in Africa (BREDA).

The regional committee has, since its creation, held 7 ordinary sessions: Dakar (1985, 1987, 2001), Lagos (1989), Paris (1992, 1998) and Conakry (1995).

During its 7th session, held on 26 and 27 November 2001 in Dakar, the committee decided to amend the Arusha convention for the following reasons:

- improve the implementation of the convention, particularly to facilitate the execution of the programme within the framework of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in the field of education which partly relates to the strengthening of centres of excellence and academic mobility.
- Promote the transparency, coherence and credibility of the procedures and criteria used in the evaluation and recognition of studies and degrees
- Take into account new forms of higher education , particularly virtual long-distance education, private education and transnational higher education.

The Cape Town experts' meeting was organised within the framework of the implementation of co-operation between BREDA and the Commonwealth of Learning (COL). The meeting was attended by 11 experts selected on the basis of their experience in the quality assurance sector and the recognition of studies and degrees.

The experts proposed a series of amendments to the current version of the Arusha convention and formulated recommendations annexed to this information note.

The revised version of the convention will be sent to the regional committee and member States, for observations and additions, before being submitted, for approval, to the 8th conference of African Education Ministers (MINEDAF VIII) which will be held in Tanzania from 2 to 6 December 2002.

Signatories:

1. Lesotho
2. Togo
3. Sudan
4. Zambia
5. Tanzania
6. Nigeria
7. Niger
8. Egypt
9. Burundi
10. Senegal
11. Burkina Faso
12. Rwanda
13. Gabon
14. Algeria
15. Equatorial Guinea
16. Guinea, Conakry
17. Côte d'Ivoire
18. Benin
19. Seychelles
20. The Holy See