

COMMUNIQUÉ ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 1ST CONFERENCE AND *3rd ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF ASSOCIATION OF WEST-AFRICA UNIVERSITIES (AWAU)

ON “THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE INTEGRATION OF THE WEST AFRICAN SUB-REGION” HELD AT international institute of engineering (2IE), BURKINA-FASO, FROM 4TH - 8TH NOVEMBER, 2013

1.0 Preamble

The 1st Conference and *3rd Annual General Meeting of Association of West-Africa Universities was held at the International Institute for Environmental Engineering with the theme: **“THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES IN THE INTEGRATION OF THE WEST AFRICAN SUB-REGION”**.

The maiden conference, which provided a regional platform, attracted participants from 6 countries within the region, namely: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote D’voire, Ghana, Nigeria and Senegal. Goodwill messages were delivered at the opening ceremony by the representatives of the Japanese and Canadian ambassadors in Burkina Faso, ministers of higher education and water resources in Burkina Faso as well as the Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission, Abuja, Nigeria and Secretary General, Association of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities (AVCNU), Prof. Mike Faborode graced the opening ceremony and also delivered goodwill messages.

Lead papers were delivered by Professors A. Oyewole (VC, Federal University, Abeokuta Nigeria and President of AAU), Ishaq Oloyede (former VC, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria), Ehile (Secretary General, AAU), Olufemi. Bamiro (former VC, University of Ibadan, Nigeria) and Clifford Tagoe (former VC, University of Legon, Ghana) respectively.

- i. The role of universities’ networks in promoting higher education
- ii. Problems and Prospects of a viable regional Interuniversity Network in West Africa
- iii. The Role of AWAU in fostering academic linkages and exchanges between Francophone and Anglophone west African Countries
- iv. The need for a stronger networking among universities in the West African sub region: the role of AWAU
- v. Challenges of University administration and management in West Africa.

*1st meeting was held at the University of Ilorin, Ilorin Nigeria in 2011

*2nd meeting was held at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana in 2012

4.0 Observations

The conference observed that:

- I. Universities are the engines of a knowledge economy and the incubator for skilled labour;
- II. Africa has the second largest population in the world and yet has a gross enrolment of less than 5% in Higher Education;
- III. many African countries spend less than 1% of their GDP on education, thus HEIs are grossly under-funded;
- IV. Countries of West Africa have many common features and challenges affecting educational and economic developments in the countries.
- V. education remains the bedrock of development across the West Africa sub region and should therefore be rigorously pursued;
- VI. the west Africa universities have great roles to play in ensuring that education is truly functional in the sub region, especially for the development of the countries;
- VII. no individual University in the sub-region can achieve the goal of making education functional without collaborating with other universities;
- VIII. the need to face the challenges of this era of globalisation by associating, integrating and collaborating among universities necessitates the establishment of AWAU
- IX. there is a disturbing disconnect between government policies and research outputs from universities within the ECOWAS states;
- X. there are very little linkages and collaboration amongst universities in the individual ECOWAS states and amongst universities across the ECOWAS state
- XI. most citizens of the ECOWAS states especially the English speaking countries are not bilingual in English and French languages and as a result constitute hindrance to regional integration in terms of educational, social and economic development;
- XII. research efforts are unnecessarily duplicated in departments and faculties in the ECOWAS universities as a result of poor networking among the Universities;
- XIII. relationship with government (through Ministry of Education, regulatory bodies) has implications for institutional autonomy ;
- XIV. the number of academic and research staff in many African institutions are disproportionally less than the number of administrative/ technical staff;
- XV. Only 14 West Africa universities (out of over 200) were in the top 100 in Africa in July 2013 webometrics ranking of world universities.

5.0 Resolutions and Recommendations

At the end of the conference, the following resolutions and recommendations were adopted that:

- 1) AWAU should collaborate with other continental and regional associations such as AU, AAU, CAMES, ECOWAS and other related bodies in order to accelerate the development of West Africa;
- 2) the universities within the ECOWAS states should engage in robust and vibrant linkages and collaboration amongst themselves;
- 3) AWAU should immediately commence the process of meeting with the Ministers of Education of the countries within the West African sub region with a view to harmonising strategies;
- 4) Governments and universities within the ECOWAS should collaborate towards the formulation and implementation of sound and beneficial policies;
- 5) Citizens of ECOWAS states should be encouraged to be fluent in both English and French languages;
- 6) Post graduate studies should be due attention by the universities within the ECOWAS region;
- 7) Universities in West Africa should engage in collaborative efforts in the critical areas of research, training, staff and students exchange etc;
- 8) in the quest to create workable networking of universities in the region, AWAU should undertake a critical evaluation of the state of the existing diverse regional initiatives towards strengthening them to achieve their diverse goals;
- 9) best practices (and harmonization processes) should be shared amongst the ECOWAS under the auspices of AWAU and ECOWAS; and
- 10) in order to achieve its mission and objectives, the AWAU must operate proactively to avoid becoming a social gathering of west African vice chancellors and university leaders.

6.0 Election:

The 2013/2015 Board was elected as follows:

- i. Prof. D.D. Kuupole (VC, University of Cape Coast, Ghana) - Chairman
- ii. Prof. A.G. Ambali (VC, University of Ilorin, Ilorin. Nigeria) – Vice Chairman, Anglophone
- iii. Dr. Paul Ginnies (DG, 2iE, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso) - Vice Chairman, Francophone
- iv. Prof. I.O. Oloyede (Former VC, University of Ilorin, Nigeria) – Acting Secretary General

Institutional members are:

- i. Association of Vice Chancellors of Nigeria Universities, Nigeria and
- ii. Body of Vice Chancellors in Ghana.

7.0 Appreciation:

The conference expressed its profound appreciation to the management and staff of the host institution the 2iE, Burkina- Faso for the wonderful reception accorded the

participants. Conference also extended gratitude to the co-sponsors of the conference, the Association of Vice Chancellors of Nigerian Universities, Nigeria (AVCNU) and the National Universities Commission (NUC), of Nigeria for providing invaluable support towards the successful organisation of the conference.