

## **Interim Committee of African Qualifications Verification Network elected**

An Interim Committee of the African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN) was elected at a formal launch of the AQVN in Cape Town.

This formal launch took place on 16 May 2016 and was part of SAQA's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday celebrations. The AQVN Interim Committee comprises representatives from 11 African countries namely: Botswana, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Delegates at this meeting also reviewed the draft constitution of the AQVN. In the coming weeks, the Interim Committee will develop an updated constitution. Delegates committed to build on the knowledge and expertise available amongst participating institutions within the AQVN. They also committed to enhance, automate and digitise verification practice and methodology as well to grow the Network to include more countries in the African continent.

The AQVN also established close links with the Groningen Declaration Network (GDN). The idea of the AQVN is to set up and implement a system that draws on best practice from around the world to electronically connect countries operating under the AQVN banner.

The AQVN was established in November 2014 following a two-day seminar on the verification of foreign qualifications. The seminar, attended by around 112 delegates from 14 countries on the African continent, had the theme '*Building trust: Promoting genuine qualifications in Africa through effective verification.*'

The seminar resulted in a *Joint Declaration on building trust and promoting genuine qualifications on the African continent*. The main purpose of this network is to bring together key stakeholders and strengthen relationships on the African continent for the verification of qualifications so that fraudulent practices can be combatted in a coordinated and effective manner. The network will promote the establishment of a common platform to verify learner records of all African people electronically through a portal.

"The real challenge for all qualification evaluation bodies lies in the need to receive accurate and trustworthy information to dispel any suspicion of fraudulent activities while implementing a system that responds quickly and cost-efficiently to the needs of stakeholders. Currently this is a time and resource intensive process, and because of the delays in obtaining feedback, many evaluation decisions remain on hold for long periods, and this has serious implications for the work and study prospects of applicants. This is one of the key obstacles we are hoping to address through the AQVN," explains SAQA CEO Mr Joe Samuels.

The AQVN is seen as a key continental-wide network that will make the work of the Addis Convention (AC) adopted in December 2014 a reality over the next decade

and more. In the AC there is a very clear commitment to student digital information collection and sharing, as well as a very strong commitment to combating qualification fraud and digital ways of verifying qualifications.

The AQVN's vision is to build a credible, trustworthy network of public verification institutions with central online digital learner records databases providing fast and affordable services operating on the African continent.