

## Joint Declaration

### Building trust and promoting genuine qualifications on the African Continent

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We, the representatives from qualifications and quality assurance bodies, federal, regional and provincial agencies, and education and training institutions and national departments of higher education and training, have met in Pretoria, South Africa on 24 and 25 November 2014 to discuss and agree on the combating of fraudulent qualifications practices affecting the African continent. The purpose of the event has been to bring together key stakeholders on the African continent and set up a network for the verification of qualifications so that fraudulent practices can be countered by building formal trust relationships as well as innovative and effective processes, including the reduction of costs.

We note that:

- Fraudulent qualification practices have increased worldwide as well as on the African continent;
- Networks for the verification of qualifications are increasingly being developed to combat fraud, and that this is currently lacking on the African continent;
- Digital repositories are becoming increasingly useful as a resource to combat fraud;
- Regional conventions, such as the *Arusha Recognition Convention* for the recognition of higher education qualifications in Africa (to be launched in December 2014), constitute important mechanisms through which a common approach to recognition can be developed;
- Learning outcomes constitute an important approach through which learning can be made more explicit, including the recognition of prior learning and foreign learning credentials; and
- National and regional qualifications frameworks are increasingly developed across the world and provide an important mechanism through which a common language and consistent approach to qualifications design and credential evaluation can be implemented, also on the Africa continent.

We agree that:

- An African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN) be established based on the following principles;
  - AQVN will be a network supported by a Secretariat that will meet at least once per year in the form of an annual gathering to review its effectiveness. As far as possible such events will rotate between member states;
  - The main purpose of the AQVN will be to bring together key stakeholders and strengthen relationships on the African continent for the verification of qualifications so that fraudulent practices can be combated in a coordinated and effective manner;
  - Continuing professional development opportunities on qualification verification will be facilitated by the AQVN;
  - The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) offered to serve as the Secretariat for the initial two years, after which the decision will be reviewed;

- The chairperson of the AQVN will be selected through an election process that takes place at the annual meeting;
  - AQVN will build concrete links with other similar international networks;
  - AQVN will work actively to gain support from the African Union and Regional Economic Communities in Africa, as well as from international agencies, governmental and non-governmental organisations.
- Bilateral and multilateral service level agreements (SLAs) between and amongst institutions and member states will be pursued to strengthen collaboration and counter qualification fraud on the continent. SLAs will be based on a jointly agreed format, which may be contextualised where necessary.

We further commit to:

- Expand participation in AQVN beyond the delegates present at the founding seminar;
- Collaborate to develop innovative ways and best practices for the verification of qualifications, including digital repositories and cost effective means to verify qualifications;
- Promote legislation to effectively deal with qualification fraud.

Pretoria

25 November 2014