

AFRICAN QUALITY ASSURANCE NETWORK (AFRIQAN)

MINUTES OF THE AFRIQAN GENERAL MEETING HELD IN BUJUMBURA, BURUNDI ON THURSDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 2014 DURING THE 6TH ICQAHEA, COMMENCING AT 0930 HOURS

PRESENT

The meeting was attended by 33 participants from 15 member countries and regional bodies namely: Nigeria, Senegal, CAMES, Uganda, Burundi, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana, Kenya, Burkina Faso, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia. Names and institutional affiliations of those present are hereby appended.

1. Call to order

The AfriQAN Coordinator, Prof J.C. Mba, called the meeting to order at 0930 hours. He apologized for the late start of the meeting that had been caused by unavailability of simultaneous language translation services. He expressed the hope that the services would be available soon but in the meantime, the Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities (AAU), Prof Etienne Ehile, graciously accepted to interpret the proceedings from English to French.

2. Adoption of the Agenda and Opening Remarks

Prof Mba presented the agenda and explained that there were no minutes of the last meeting since this was not a General Assembly where all documents would have been circulated beforehand, including financial status, update on what had been done since the last meeting, workplan and budget, plus election of new executive members of the AfriQAN Board. According to its Constitution, AfriQAN meets once every 2 years and the formal meeting will be held in 2015. He informed the audience that this was an informal meeting endorsed by the President of AfriQAN, Prof. Chiedu Mafiana, who felt that the opportunity of the 6th International Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education in Africa (ICQAHEA) was important for AfriQAN members to come together and talk among themselves about the Network. The agenda was adopted with no amendments after which members agreed that any additional issue would be discussed under the item *Any Other Business*.

3. Post 3rd AfriQAN General Assembly Activities

Members were informed that since the last meeting held in Libreville in 2013, AfriQAN managed to undertake few activities including: developing and submitting proposals for funding to development partners, as well as participating in Quality Assurance related events.

4. **AfriQAN Funding**

Participants were informed that AfriQAN has continued to enjoy goodwill from Quality Assurance stakeholders, and has been receiving requests for training from external quality assurance agencies (EQAAs) and higher education institutions (HEIs) and therefore AfriQAN needed to upscale its activities. However, the major constraint was limited funding for its activities. The World Bank and UNESCO had been funding some activities for the past three years but the funding period has expired and funding focus has shifted to other needy areas. Efforts were underway to explore other funding avenues. To that end a proposal had recently been submitted to UNESCO and the response was still pending. Within the next two months a-€2million proposal will be submitted to the European Union Commission.

Another area of concern highlighted by the AfriQAN Coordinator was the non-payment of subscriptions by members. As of July 2014, only two out of the potential 23 full members and the numerous potential associate members (notably HEIs) had paid the annual fee of \$1,000 (for EQAAs) and \$500 (for HEIs) per year. Others were yet to pay. It should be noted that the expenses for undertaking quality assurance activities funded and organized by AfriQAN, which members enjoy, exceed the membership subscriptions. Members were therefore implored to introspect and make sure that they paid their subscriptions timeously.

On a positive note, the European Union (EU) continues to assist with funding for AfriQAN activities for the past 3 years. This reflects the EU's confidence in the capabilities of AfriQAN to deliver. There was therefore need for AfriQAN to continue to deliver on its activities. Prof Mba ended his opening remarks by wishing all participants fruitful deliberations.

5. Welcome address by the AfriQAN President

The AfriQAN President, Prof. Chiedu Mafiana, who chaired the occasion, apologised for not being able to provide a French version of the Agenda but promised that such oversight would not happen again. He went on to read his address which resonated well with the opening remarks by the AfriQAN Coordinator. He reminded the audience that the mandate of AfriQAN was to improve quality assurance in higher education, an achievement that was paramount to the national and regional quest for sustainable development. He gave the following analogy; “We can easily forgive a child for being afraid of the dark but the real tragedy is when adults are afraid of light.”

He ended his address by suggesting that since the last meeting had been held in Gabon (Francophone), the next meeting should be held in an Anglophone or Lusophone African country.

6. Goodwill message from Prof Etienne Ehile

The AAU Secretary General, Prof. Etienne Ehile, mentioned that it had become a tradition for AfriQAN to meet at any major continental event related quality assurance issues i.e. Abidjan - 2012; Libreville - 2013 and Bujumbura - 2014. He highlighted the importance of rising to the occasion on quality assurance and also showing commitment to AfriQAN by making contributions and subscriptions. He concluded by stating that judging by the activities undertaken by AfriQAN, it was evident that it was still relevant to the African quality assurance arena.

7. Comments from other Board Members

Mr Richard Adjei, the Deputy Executive Secretary of National Accreditation Board (NAB) of Ghana and AfriQAN Board Member representing West Africa, informed members that Nigeria and Ghana were actively pursuing the formation of a Sub-regional quality assurance network for Anglophone countries in West Africa.

A participant from Senegal, Prof. Papa Gueye, lamented at the fact that the AfriQAN Meeting information was being presented only in English, ignoring French and Portuguese. He had expressed the same problem in Libreville in 2012 but nothing had been done. He argued that the 19 French-speaking countries under the CAMES zone should be taken into consideration in AfriQAN scheme of

things. He suggested that exchange programmes for EQAAs should be encouraged for sharing experiences and good practices between French-speaking and English-speaking countries.

The AfriQAN Board Member representing Southern Africa and Deputy Chief Executive Officer of the Zimbabwe Council for Higher Education (ZIMCHE), Dr. Evelyn C. Garwe, presented the highlights of the first Southern Africa sub-regional conference on quality assurance that was held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe on 3-4 July 2014. The conference was attended by 88 participants from ten countries. The resolutions included the formation of a task force made up of representatives from Botswana, South Africa, Lesotho, Namibia and chaired by Zimbabwe. The task team would then work on the modalities leading to the formation of a sub-regional quality assurance network. Namibia would host the task team and Botswana would host the next regional conference.

8. Contributions from participants

Highlights of contributions made by participants include:

- AfriQAN is a new organisation and hence much cannot be expected from it at this stage. There is need to link up regional quality assurance agencies and include them in all quality assurance deliberations;
- One of the problems identified was the voluntary nature of AfriQAN and legal issues;
- It is important for AAU to work with Vice Chancellors to make sure that their quality assurance units subscribe to AfriQAN;

Quality assurance agencies who had managed to introduce internal quality assurance units in all their universities were asked to share with others how they implemented the exercise and how these quality assurance units could be funded. Kenya, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria and Zimbabwe all indicated that the following issues were critical:

- ✓ The need for legislation;
- ✓ Lobbying and buy-in from Vice Chancellors and HEIs;
- ✓ Capacity development through training workshops;
- ✓ Need for regional networks to work together; and

✓ need for budget for quality assurance units in each HEI.

9. Response by the Chairman

The Chairman noted the shortcomings regarding language issue and pledged to ensure that AfriQAN documentation and events must reflect simultaneous translation from English to French. He also took note of the suggestion to encourage staff exchange of EQAAs as a way of sharing experience and breaking linguistic barriers. He admitted that the Anglophone part of West Africa was the weakest link in quality assurance and hence the need to emulate what CAMES was doing.

Already AfriQAN has been involving regional bodies on its activities as evidenced by the fact that the Vice President of AfriQAN, who is the Secretary General of CAMES, Prof. Bertrand Mbatchi, was present at the meeting along with another CAMES staff. Furthermore, the current Executive Secretary of IUCEA, Prof. M.H. Nkunya, was actually the founding President of AfriQAN. His absence at the meeting was due to his other engagements and not due to the fact that he had not been invited. He however agreed that there was the need to improve the AfriQAN publicity through interacting with the AAU and the African Union Commission (AUC). It was clear that it was beneficial for AfriQAN to be strong and act as the organ to assist in the AUC and AAU imperatives. The AfriQAN Coordinator was tasked to send the AfriQAN Constitution to all HEIs.

10. The Venue of the next meeting

Following the Chairman's suggestion to hold the next meeting in 2015 in an Anglophone or Lusophone African country, participants discussed the next possible venue. Southern Africa was suggested. Mozambique and Namibia were nominated but they expressed that they were not yet ready. After considerable debate and wider consultation with other 6th ICQAHEA participants, Nigeria subsequently offered to host the 2015 General Assembly and the 7th ICQAHEA. The offer was accepted by members.

11. Any other business

Prof Mba invited those agencies and institutions wishing to join AfriQAN to see him whilst those members who wished to pay their subscriptions were advised to contact Dr E.C. Garwe. A group photograph of participants was taken. There being no other business, Lesotho moved for adjournment and was seconded by Namibia. The meeting ended at 11:25hours.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chiedu Mafiana". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above the printed name of the signatory.

Approved for circulation:

**Prof.Chiedu Mafiana
AfriQAN President/Meeting Chairman**

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF MEMBERS AND THEIR INSTITUTIONAL AFFILIATION

NAME	ORGANISATION	EMAIL
1. Prof Chiedu Mafiana	NUC, Nigeria - AfriQAN President (CHAIRING)	chiedu.mafiana@gmail.com
2. Prof Bertrand Mbatchi	CAMES Sec. General/AfriQAN Vice President	mbatchibertrand@yahoo.fr
3. Prof Etienne E. Ehile	AAU Secretary General, Ghana	eehile@aau.org
4. Prof Jonathan C Mba	AAU - AfriQAN Coordinator, Ghana	jcmba@aau.org
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6. Bishmanrimana Seythin	ENS - Burundi	
7. Prof Goski Alabi	UPSA - Ghana	goski.alabi@upsa.edu.gh
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