

9th Regional Committee Meeting for Regional Asia Pacific
Convention on Recognition of Studies, Diplomas, Degrees in HE

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Revision of the Arusha Convention for African States

By

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“Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas, Degrees and Other Academic Qualifications in Higher Education in African States”

- Adopted at Arusha, Tanzania on 5 December 1981
- Known as ‘The Arusha Convention’

Arusha Convention

- To date some 21 signatories (out of 53 countries)
- Implementation of the Convention by Regional Committee comprising reps of contracting states meeting biennially
- Secretariat: Higher Education Unit of UNESCO Africa Regional Office in Dakar (BREDA)
- So far 8 meetings of Regional Committee (RC): 1985, 1987, 1989, 1992, 1995, 1998, 2001, 2003

Amendments to the Convention

- Two different sets of amendments made to the Convention:
 - in 2003
 - in 2006
- The 2006 amendments incorporate most of the 2003 ones

Arusha Convention – 2003 Amendment

- 7th RC Meeting (November 2001) recommended revision of Convention
- Meeting of Experts held in June 2002 and proposed amendments
- 8th RC Meeting (June 2003) approved amendments, recommended these be translated & both English & French versions sent to African HE Ministerial Meeting for approval

Main Amendments of June 2003

■ Preamble

- Experience of Lisbon Convention (1997) for European region to be taken into account
- Diversification & expansion of HE in Africa recognized
- Declaration of WCHE 1998 on recognition of qualifications mentioned, priority in Africa for postgraduate education
- Importance of mobility for implementing regional & sub-regional initiatives e.g. NEPAD, ECOWAS, SADC

Main Amendments of June 2003 *Cont'd*

■ Definitions

- postgraduate education defined
- definitions of 'access', 'admission', 'competent recognising authority', 'credit transfer' added

■ Aims

- Fair assessment of refugees & displaced persons
- Establishment of QA mechanisms at national/regional levels
- Use of Diaspora & checking 'brain drain'

Main Amendments of June 2003 *Cont'd*

■ Undertakings

- Flexibility in recognition of qualifications from other states introduced
- Right to refuse recognition if differences can be shown

However, no action taken regarding the amendments because of changes at BREDA – until 2006.

2006 Amendment

- In July 2006, BREDA convened 20 experts to meeting in Dakar; meeting comprised reps of:
 - Regional Committee for Arusha Convention
 - African Regional Committee in Charge of Follow-Up to WCHE
 - UNESCO (Paris, BREDA, Harare Cluster Office)
 - Association of African Universities
 - African & Malagasy Council for Higher Education (CAMES)
 - African Virtual University
 - Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie (AUF)

2006 Amendment

Plenary & Working Group sessions held to consider:

- Amendments to the Convention
- Plan of Action & process for revising Convention

2006 Amendment

Issues identified for inclusion in Amended Version

- Expand definitions section
- New modes of learning & types of learners: DE, CBHE, e-Learning, Life Long Learning, etc.
- Effects of globalization & WTO/GATS
- Recognition of prior learning
- Validation of acquired professional experience
- Develop National Qualifications Frameworks
- Establish National Information Centres
- Quality Assurance & Accreditation of institutions
- Global trends ref harmonization of qualifications e.g. Bologna Process
- Caution ref fake diplomas and 'Diploma Mills'

Plan of Action & Revision Process

- Obtain approval of African Ministers of Education for revising Convention at their Sept 2006 meeting *(Done)*
- Appoint 2 Consultants to draft new Convention, using 2003 & July 2006 recommendations. They should also be guided by revised Arab States Convention. *(Done, drafts in English & French submitted to BREDA end Nov 2006)*
- Draft to be commented by small Committee of 4 experts present at July 2006 meeting. *(Done by end-Feb 2007)*

Plan of Action & Revision Process *Cont'd*

- Revised Convention to be signed by African Ministers of Education at their Meeting of mid-July 2007 (*Pending*)

[Note: Draft Convention being vetted by Legal Affairs Dept of UNESCO Paris. May require approval by UNESCO Exec Board & Gen Conference before approval by African Ministers of Education]

Tips for Revising Asia Pacific Convention

- Obtain prior approval of regional Ministers of Education for revision of Convention
- Extend consultation process beyond Regional Committee members. Involve reps of other key relevant regional bodies.
- Difficult for a Committee to carry out revision. Agree on main elements of revisions & appoint one or two consultants to do it.
- Use experiences of other Convention revisions
- There are legal implications in revising a UNESCO Convention. Getting new Convention approved can be even more complicated. Be aware of all legal aspects.
- Set out a realistic time frame – matters can get delayed unexpectedly.

THANK YOU