Background Information

Since 1975, UNESCO has initiated six regional conventions on mutual recognition of degrees, diplomas and studies in Latin America and the Caribbean (1975), in the Mediterranean States (1976), the Arab States (1978), Europe (1979), Africa (1981), Asia and the Pacific (1983). These regional conventions are legally binding instruments which aim at promoting and facilitation academic mobility. At present, more than 130 countries have ratified one or more of the six regional conventions.

In recent years, there have been significant shifts in higher education development with an accrued focus of the international community on quality assurance and accreditation, as well as increased acknowledgement of the importance of a fair recognition of qualifications in a more globalized world. To respond to new developments in higher education, a number of these regional conventions have either undergone or is undergoing revision. The 1979 Europe Convention was the first one to be revised resulting in the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention. Currently, the 1981 Arusha Convention in Africa, the 1978 Arab States Convention, as well as the 1983 Asia-Pacific Regional Convention are undergoing revision.

The Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific was adopted in Bangkok in 1983. A total of 21 countries have ratified the regional convention and the most recently one being Indonesia which ratified in October 2007. Since adoption of the Convention, the Regional Committee has been meeting bi-annually and examining periodic reports from state-parties on the progress and difficulties in applying the convention. At the 8th Session of the Regional Committee which was held in Kunming, China in 2005, it was agreed that a working group should be formed to revise or amend some parts of the Convention taking into account the many challenges of cross-border education.
Since then a Working Group has been established to work on the draft of the revised Convention through on-line discussion and a face-to-face meeting which was held in conjunction with the 9th Session of the Regional Committee Meeting in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in May, 2007, and in Bangkok, Thailand in April, 2008. Finally the Working Group has produced a draft of the revised Regional Convention which was endorsed by represented state parties at the 10th Session of the Regional Committee Meeting in Manila, Philippines. The revised convention was circulated to all member states in the Asia-Pacific region for further refinement of the document.

At the 35th Session of UNESCO’s General Conference, the Director-General was requested to convene an International Conference of States with a view to adoption of the amendments to the 1983 Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific.