Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education

International Conference of States
Tokyo 2011
UNESCO Regional Conventions

- 6 Regional UNESCO Regional Conventions (dating from 1975 – 1983)
- Asia and the Pacific Regional Convention adopted at the International Conference in Bangkok in 1983
- 21 Countries have to date ratified the Regional Convention
Eighth Session – Kunming 2005

- Recommended that the 1983 Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas, Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific be revised.
- Working party established
- Further discussion occurred at the Ninth Session in Seoul in 2007
- Revised draft developed during 2007-08
- Working Party Report forwarded to the Tenth Session in Manila, 2009
The Tenth Session accepted the revised Regional Convention with modifications.

Recommended that the Working Party finalise the Revised Regional Convention

Working party continued to accept modifications during 2009

Revised Regional Convention forwarded to UNESCO General Conference in October 2009, which agreed to convene the International Conference of States during 2010-2011.
2010 - 2011

- The Working Party Continued to accept suggested changes and modifications to the Revised Regional Convention during 2010.
- The Working Party met again in June 2011 to consider finalising the Revised Regional Convention prior to sending out to all States.
- The Revised Regional Convention was further revised at the last meeting of the Working Group in October 2011.
Why Revise the Regional Convention?

- Significant changes in Higher Education over 25 years
- Exponential growth in private and public providers
- Increase of cross-border providers
- Increase in communication technology
- Massification in Higher Education which has changed the governance and administration of higher education
- Emergence of life-long education and learning
- Qualifications earned through distance education learning
- Development of national qualifications frameworks
- Development of assessment tools to measure learning outcomes
- Need to build national capacity and sustainable higher education systems.
Directions to the Working Party

- Ensure that it reflected the needs of the Asia and the Pacific Region
- Revision – not a new Convention as some countries had gone through a very long process for ratification
- Reflect the changes that are going on in Higher Education – e.g. Cross-border education, blended learning etc.
- Make it a dynamic tool that continue to meet the needs of the region in the future.
What are the Main Differences?

- Inclusions of the following sections which were not in the 1983 Version
  - Undertakings for Immediate Applications
  - Machinery for Implementation
  - Documentation
  - Cooperation with International Organisations
  - Institutions of Higher Education Under Authority of more than one State
  - Ratification, Approval, Acceptance and Entry into Force
What are the similarities?

- Still retains a number of sections with text unchanged
- Also incorporated some of the annexes added to the Convention over the last twenty years
- Consistent with the intent of the Lisbon Convention and some of the other Regional Conventions that are currently being revised.
The Revised Regional Convention

- Preamble
- Definition of Terms
- Section II - The Competencies of Authorities
- Section III - Principles Related to the Assessment of Qualifications
- Section IV - Recognition of Qualifications Giving Access to Higher Education
- Section V - Recognition of Partial Study
- Section VI – Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications
- Section VII – Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-Like Situation
- Section VIII – Information on the Assessment/Accreditation and Recognition Matters
- Section IX – Implementation
- Section X – Final Clauses
Areas for further Discussion

- **Title:**
  - Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education

- **Period of Study**
  - Partial Studies – change made to reflect content rather than time of study

- **Substantial Difference**
  - Some countries suggested providing more detail. The WG recommend that this be done during the implementation phase

- **Non-discriminatory**
  - The WG suggests that this term be retained because of the consistency with UNESCO guiding principles.
Areas for further Discussion (2)

- Employment
  - The WG received positive and negative comments about the recognition of qualifications for employment purposes – suggests that this be discussed during the ICS.

- Section VII Refugees
  - The WG suggests that there is sufficient flexibility within the current article to allow individual countries to manage this within their constitutional, legal, and regulatory frameworks.
Areas for further Discussion (3)

- National Information Centres
  - The establishment of National Information Centres is not a pre-requisite to signing the Regional Convention. However, after signing the Revised Convention, member states should try to establish the National Information Centre to facilitate recognition of higher education qualifications in accordance with their resources and Governance structure.

- Signatures
  - The Working Group accepted the recommendation that the Revised Convention should be open to signatures by all member States of UNESCO. All UNESCO Member States have been invited to the International Conference of States as Regional Conventions are open to signature for all Member States.
Questions & Answers

• Is this Convention open to just countries from Asia-Pacific?
  - No. This Convention is open to all UESCO members & the Holy See.

• Are countries required to have a National Information Centre before signing?
  - No. This is something can be developed later.

• Does this Convention also apply to Professional Qualifications?
  - No. This Convention only applies to qualifications in higher education
Questions and Answers

- What are the advantages of signing this convention?
- There is now greater movement of students from Asia-Pacific region studying in Europe and North America and require their qualification to be formally recognised.

- Is a country required to automatically recognise an international qualification?
- No. This is about countries establishing a fair and transparent process.
Questions and Answers

- Does signing this Convention mean changing our country’s legislation?
  - No. Regional Conventions do not supersede a country’s legislation.

- Can our country sign this Convention as well as the Lisbon Convention?
  - Yes. This Convention is based on the Lisbon Convention.

- Can we sign tomorrow but out country ratify, access or approval later?
  - Yes. In fact most countries will take time to formalise ratification, accession or approval.