

EXTRA ORDINARY MEETING OF SADC MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

**5 June 2012
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA**

Press Release

An Extra-Ordinary Meeting of Ministers of Higher Education and Training was held on the 5th of June 2012 in Johannesburg, South Africa. Honourable Ministers from the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Swaziland, and Deputy Ministers from Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe attended the meeting. The Seychelles and Mauritius were represented by their Ambassadors to the Republic of South Africa, while Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania were represented by Senior Officials. Also in attendance were representatives from the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), African Development Bank and the Southern African Regional Universities Association (SARUA). The SADC Secretariat was represented by the Director for Social and Human Development and Special Programmes.

In his official opening remarks, Honourable Prof. Arlindo Chilundo, Vice Minister of Education, Government of the Republic of Mozambique reminded delegates that higher education is the cornerstone of innovation, socio-economic and human development of all nations. It should therefore be prioritized in SADC.

Ministers reviewed the situation of higher education and noted with concern that the region is experiencing very low levels of enrollment and participation when compared to other regions in Africa and globally. Investment in higher education falls far short of what is required to match the current and future demands for the predominantly young population of SADC. The leadership and management of higher education institutions are in many cases weak, while the quality of teachers and the education that is available does not always provide relevant and adequate knowledge and skills required for the labour market. As a result, many young people who complete secondary education do not proceed to higher education. Many of those who graduate fail to find jobs and are not always capable of initiating and growing their own entrepreneurial and business enterprises. It is clear that higher education is not adequately contributing to socio-economic development, improving the well-being of the majority poor citizens, and to realizing the regional integration aspirations of the people of SADC.

To address these challenges, Ministers agreed that it is necessary to radically transform the way higher education is provided in the region, to improve and expand it to adequately respond to the development needs and challenges of the region. They underscored the urgency to expand the enrollment and access to higher education including the expansion and use of information, communication technologies (ICT), and enhance its quality and relevance to the socio-economic and human development demands of SADC.

Ministers called upon SADC governments and other relevant stakeholders to mobilise and invest more funding, infrastructure and human resources, and improve leadership, governance and management of higher education institutions. They encouraged more research, monitoring and evaluation to be conducted to guide the transformation of higher education, and to inform policies and programmes that respond to the needs of the growing economies of the region.

Ministers recognized the need to scale up higher education using various strategies and methodologies. To demonstrate their commitment to cooperate and work together as a region, the Ministers reviewed and approved the SADC Regional Open and Distance Learning (ODL) Policy Framework which provides policy direction to accelerate access to quality education in all sectors of education, including higher education.

To ensure that their decisions and resolutions will be effectively implemented Ministers established a SADC Technical Committee on Higher Education and Training and Research and Development. They mandated the Committee to develop a regional strategic plan on higher education and training, research development guided by the deliberations of the Extra-Ordinary Meeting.

The Honourable Dr David Namwandi, Deputy Minister of Education in Namibia offered vote of thanks urging Member States to follow-up on the deliberations of the meeting.