ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES (AAU)

CONCEPT NOTE

For

CONFERENCE OF RECTORS, VICE-CHANCELLORS AND PRESIDENTS OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES (COREVIP) 2019

''The Role of Higher Education Institutions in Promoting the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25)''

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1.0   1- Background and Context

1.1   The 21st Century has emerged as a world that is increasingly being dominated by the drive towards sustainable development through the use of knowledge capital catalysed by technology in many forms. In spite of the two glaring and contrasting aspects of human development (search for peace, harmony, cure for debilitating diseases) and doom (war, catastrophes, set back in global diplomacy, digital divide) many indices propelling the human race towards sustainability are in their ascendancy. They include, but not limited to, the attainment of highly educated, mobile and adaptable workforce, engendering a multi-skilled and multi-tasked generation of human beings, having a pre-eminence of a knowledge society and a learning society that leads to life-long learning for all, and the use of ecological and geographical conditions to a regional or national advantage. In all these, the instrument or platform identified over and over as conduit for achieving them is education. The reason is not too far-fetched. Education is directly proportional to the level of development of a country or region. In other words, low or high level of development indices are deeply rooted in the measure of education provided the people.

1.2   It goes without saying, therefore, that in a rapidly changing environment, Africa must seriously and continuously re-evaluate, indeed search and bring to the fore, innovative and creative ways of enhancing its human capital production which is tremendously critical and pivotal to accelerating continental and national development.

1.3   The challenges for Africa are enormous. The continent must, as an integral part of the global knowledge economy, search, produce and adapt knowledge to overcome its developmental challenges. Higher education, as a knowledge producer, has assumed a lethal supremacy in the emerging global knowledge society. The real challenge for Africa in the 21st century is the capacity to develop a higher education sector for continental relevance within a globally competitive world.

1.4   The road map for Africa's sustainable development appears well mapped out in the global and regional agendas that have pointed towards higher education as the currently known panacea. Some of these agendas include the transposition from Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with the promise of Education for All through what is now well known as Education 2030 Framework for Action (EFA). Others are the 2015 United Nations Paris Climate

Change Conference (Conference of Parties 21), Agenda 2063 of the African Union, and the Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25).

1.5   CESA 16-25 lays the details of the colossal development issues of Africa and the need to fully tap into the youthful population (youth bulge) in a bid to reap the demographic dividends for sustainable development. The obvious and palpable message from CESA 16-25 is the need for the higher education sector in Africa to understand, own and fully immerse itself in the continental search for sustainable development. There is no better forum than at COREVIP to engage our Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in this search through collaboration, co-operation and open discussion for the best and efficient ways of being relevant in the 21st century development quagmire that Africa finds itself.

1.6   It is in this context that the Association of African Universities (AAU) is organising its 2019 Conference of Rectors, Vice Chancellors and Presidents (COREVIP) under the theme *''The Role of Higher Education Institutions in Promoting Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25)''*. CESA 16-25 is Africa's own indigenous road map towards higher education's involvement in thrusting Africa towards sustainable development in the 21st century. The top echelon of academic managers in our higher education institutions (HEIs), as major and significant stakeholders, must first tease out and come to a negotiated understanding of CESA 16-25 before enlisting the interest, support and participation of the evidently enlightened workforce they lead in their various institutions in the continent.

1.7   Fortuitously, COREVIP 2019 shall gather at the home of one of the world's and Africa's oldest universities, Al-Azhar University, Cairo at the beginning of the next golden years (having just celebrated in 2017 the first 50th years) of the birth of AAU in Morocco, the far-western geographical neighbour of our host country, Egypt. Al-Azhar University was founded by the Shīʿite Fāṭimids in 970 AD and was formally inaugurated and organised by 988.

1.8   The significance of holding COREVIP 2019 and to specifically interrogate *''The Role of Higher Education Institutions in Promoting Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25)'' in* the search for sustainable development for Africa cannot be more apt as it appeals to, and corroborates, the history of Africa finding novel educational solutions to both continental and global issues as was done by Al-Azhar University centuries ago. Africa seemed to have come full circle in the 21st century, to higher education's original home to seek, as it were from the fountain of knowledge, for the

enduring solutions to Africa's enormous challenges in higher education towards the continent's sustainable development.

2.0   2- Sign Posts of Sustainable Development: Continental and Global Circumstances

2.1   As dictated by developments in the 21st century world, nations and societies must latch on to the transformational imperatives, as fast as they emerge, otherwise they risk being abandoned in the dump hill of ineffectual condition. Africa must take serious cognisance of the dictates of the 21st century dominated by knowledge economy and technology, the increasing demand for constant communication and use of telecommunication and the digital provisions, the needs of the 21st century learners and the demand for adequately prepared 21st century teachers to impart the needed skills through the provision of quality and innovative higher education whose demand is unparalleled in the history of the human race.

2.2   On 25 September, 2015, the United Nations General Assembly formally adopted the universal, integrated and transformative 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development along with 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 associated targets. While it needs to be emphasised that SDG Goal 4 addresses education in all its ramifications through the Education 2030 Framework for Action (FFA), all the other 16 global goals for sustainable development have significant links with education.

2.3   In 2013, the African Union Commission (AUC) in partnership with and assistance from the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) and the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) crafted a development agenda for Africa called *The Africa We Want*, which targets that by the year 2063 there should be 'an Africa of our dreams that is prosperous, healthy, vigorous, creative and exciting' (Versi, 2015). In an expatiated discussion, Dr Akinwumi Adesina, the President of the African Development Bank (AfDB), has opined that we need a ''new Africa with prosperous, sustainable and inclusive growth; one that is peaceful, secure and united, regionally integrated and globally competitive''. The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA) in a simple term translates Agenda 2063 into achievable objectives through the use of education.

Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25)

2.4   The raison d'être for CESA 16-25 is that education has long been recognised as a critical sector whose *"performance directly affects and even determines the quality and magnitude of Africa's development."* In line with the First Decade of Education in Africa of 1999 and the Second Decade for Education in Africa which came to a close in 2015, a post-2015 Development Agenda (Assembly/AU/Dec. 423 (XIX) which culminated in the African Agenda 2063 gave rise to the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 (CESA 16-25).

2.5   Indicator manual has been produced which will be used to measure progress on the Strategic Objectives of CESA 16-25. The Indicator Handbook is divided into twelve sections. Each section represents a Strategic Objective of CESA 16-25. The indicators were identified and agreed upon by the African Union Specialised Technical Group on Education, Science and Technology, based on how well they reflect the goals of the CESA Strategic Objectives and the targets of Sustainable Development Goal Four as well as their feasibility for collection. It should be noted that effort has been made to ensure that these indicators are consistent with global goals.

2.6   So far, CESA has fourteen (14) thematic clusters including: STEM Education, ICT in Education, Teacher Development, Women & Girls Education, Higher Education, School Feeding, Peace and Education, Literacy and Lifelong Learning, Education Planning, TVET, Life Skills, Early Childhood Education, Students' Association and Parents' Association. The goal of these thematic clusters is to bring together actors working on similar themes to achieve each strategy's expected results. In all cases of cluster and sub-cluster formation, experts on the continent who work in areas which include but are not limited to data, strategies, policies, procedures, programmes and standards for the attainment of each of the 12 educational objectives were sourced and brought together for meetings regularly.

3.0   3- AAU Strategic Direction (2016 – 2020)

3.1   COREVIP 2019 is firmly rooted in the AAU Strategic Plan for 2016 – 2020 in which CESA 16-25 had been discussed and implanted in its implementation.

3.2   The relationships amongst the various global and continental agendas and initiatives are such that they flow into one another in a cross-cutting and overlapping manner to indicate the synergy, interconnectivity and responsiveness to the common tangible outcomes of sustainable development for all nations, regions and the whole world. These are indicated as shown in Figure 1 below:
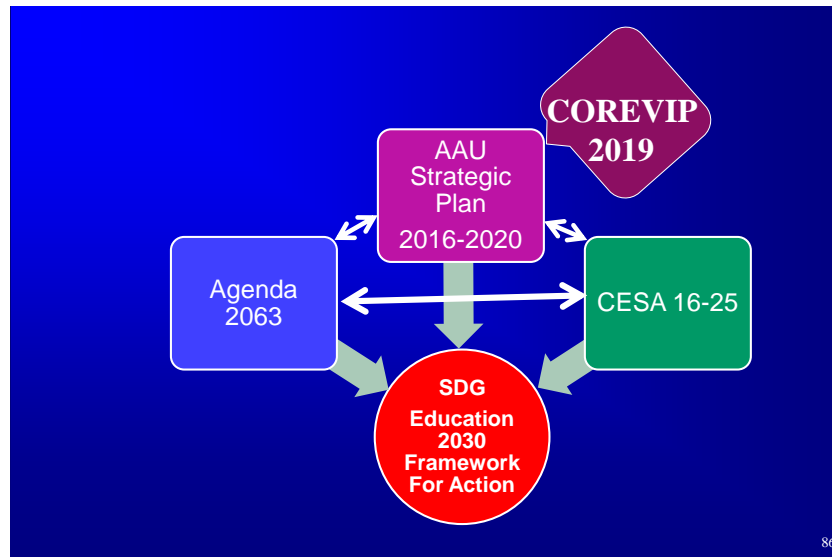
Figure 1: The interconnectivity amongst global and continental agendas

3.3 The AAU 2016 – 2020 Strategic Plan has as one of its foci, the implementation of programmes in the area of *SDGs as spelt out in Incheon 2030, CAP 2015 and COP 21*; the *science, technology and innovation as spelt out in STISA 2024*; the *Declaration and Action Plan of the Dakar Summit on Higher Education* (Dakar 2015), the *UNESCO Priority Africa* (Operational Strategy 2014-2021), *The Africa We Want Agenda 2063*; and the monitoring of performance of HEIs and education targets in The African Union's *CESA 16-25*.In line with these agendas, AAU was appointed by African Union Commission in 2017 to coordinate the Higher Education Cluster of CESA 16-25.

4.0   4- Conference Aim, Theme and Sub-Themes

The aim of COREVIP 2019 is to create a congenial environment for harnessing Africa's best minds and brains in directing efforts to the effective roles which HEIs can and should play in promoting CESA 16-25. The COREVIP 2019 is expected to create awareness, to discuss, identify and strategise on the *Theme ''**The Role of Higher Education Institutions in Promoting Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16-25)''**. The following COREVIP 2019 sub-themes, which reflect the strategic objectives of CESA 16-25, and become the focus of discussion and networking at the conference, are cross-cutting and overlapping:

Sub-Theme 1: *Focus on the science and mathematics curricula in youth training and disseminate scientific knowledge and culture in society.*

> Given the central role science and mathematics play in the development of a variety of professions and the current focus on the high demand for STEM graduates world-wide, it is important for COREVIP to discuss this sub-theme

in relation to new relevant and effective science and mathematics curricula, how to raise the number of teachers who are qualified and proficient in the subjects and the effect these have in increasing the number of youth interested in STEM courses.

Sub-Theme 2: *Expand TVET opportunities at tertiary levels and strengthen linkages between the world of work and education and training systems.*

How can higher education enhance the expansion of TVET opportunities? How can we make TVET directly relevant to the world of work and training systems? What contribution can HEIs make to mainstreaming and prioritising TVET in secondary schools? How important is it to track the participation of girls and young women as an indication of access to strategic job opportunities in TVET related professions?

Sub-Theme 3: *Revitalize and expand tertiary education, research and innovation to address continental challenges and promote global competitiveness.*

What priority do African countries give to research and innovation at the tertiary level of education and how can HEIs help to promote and focus attention to retaining and supporting the best brains who graduate annually to remain in HEIs and conduct development-oriented research. Do HEIs have access to enough and adequate funding for research? What new strategies can HEIs develop to attract research funding from all sectors, especially industry.

Sub-Theme 4: *Promote peace education and conflict prevention and resolution at all levels of education and for all age groups.*

In Africa, more than occurs in other regions of the world, armed conflicts and other forms of wars have caused a lot of havoc in the communities with millions being displaced from their original homes. How do these conflicts affect the development process of a country? Has any government developed and adopted strategies to promote peace and ensure that conflict is prevented at all cost? Are there alternative dispute resolution practices in place in many African countries? Are there strategies that HEIs have helped to develop in their various countries to ensure the continuation of education during armed conflict? To what extent have global citizenship education, education for sustainable development including gender equality and human rights, are mainstreamed in African countries?

Sub-Theme 5: *Improve management of education system as well build and enhance capacity for data collection, management, harness the capacity of ICT to*

improve access, quality and management of education and training systems.

What steps have HEIs taken to support the realisation of SDGs through enhanced capacity for data collection and management, research and scholarship? How do the MIS sections in the various HEIs relate with the ICT division in contributing to the mission and vision of the institutions? What success stories do we have in Africa in the deployment of ICT to enhance access, quality and reduce the cost of education? What obstacles do HEIs encounter in the adoption, adaptation and use of ICT in instruction and training? How does the availability of ICT or lack of it affect the objectives of setting up ODL in the various HEIs in Africa?

Sub-Theme 6: *Promoting mobility through harmonization of quality assurance and accreditation systems.*

The African Union Commission has for some years now focused on the intra Africa mobility of students and staff and researchers as well as harmonisation of qualifications across the regions of the continent. How have HEIs embraced and implemented these issues? How would the setting up of Quality Assurance mechanisms in the various HEIs assist in the implementation of these issues? What factors count against quality assurance of systems, learning environments and resources across the regions of Africa and how can they be ameliorated?

Sub-Theme 7: *Identifying new directions in improving management of education through enhanced capacity for data collection and management, research and scholarship and efficient governance of HEIs in Africa.*

What new ways have HEIs developed to improve the management of education through enhanced capacity for data collection and management, research and scholarship in Africa? Do our institutions produce enough professionals to handle EMIS? EMIS is a system for collection, processing, analysis, publication, dissemination and rendering of Information services for the management of educational resources and services. How can the various HEIs assist African governments to use evidence-based decision-making practices for education and training? How can the system check that these educational resources and services are being used for their intended purpose?

5.0   5- Who to Attend COREVIP 2019

The following major Stakeholders, who are pivotal to and have crucial roles to play in the promotion and implementation of CESA 16-25 are expected to attend and fully engage in COREVIP 2019. These are among others:

5.1   African Union Commission (principally the Human Resource, Science & Technology Division);

5.2   Committee of 10 Heads of State Championing Education & Science Technology Innovation (STI) in Africa;

5.3   Ministers of Education/Trade and Industry/Science and Technology/Information & Communication;

5.4   Diplomatic Missions;

5.5   Development Partners and International Agencies and Organisations related to or and interested in Education; Organised Private Sector and Captains of Industry;

5.6   Providers of ICT tools in higher education

5.7   Regional Economic Commissions (RECs);

5.8   Regional Educational Bodies (IUCEA, SAROUA, AWAU, AArU, HE Body of Central Africa);

5.9   Research Bodies and Organisations;

5.10   Various Clusters and Sub-clusters of CESA as established by the AUC;

5.11   Top Managers of African Higher Education Institutions;

5.12   Students Unions;

5.13   Women organizations; and

5.14   Other Stakeholders in HE (Students, Civil Society, Professional Associations, Publishers).

6.0   References

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