

COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE 5th CONFERENCE AND 7TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASSOCIATION OF WEST AFRICA UNIVERSITIES (AWAU) HOSTED BY UNIVERSITE ABDOU MOUMOUNI, NIAMEY, NIGER REPUBLIC HELD AT HOTEL GAWEYE, NIAMEY, NIGER REPUBLIC FROM 17TH TO 21ST SEPTEMBER, 2017

1.0 Preamble

The 5th Conference and 7th Annual General Meeting of Association of West Africa Universities was held at the Gaweye Hotel with the theme: **“ATTAINING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS: THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES”**. The Conference, which provided a regional platform, attracted participants from 6 countries within the sub-region, namely: Benin Republic, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal. It was declared open by the Special Guest of Honour, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation Niger Republic and the welcome address was delivered by Prof. Habibou Abarchi, Rector, Universite Abdou Moumouni. Also at the occasion, the opening remarks were made by Prof. Abdulganiyu Ambali, Chairman, AWAU and Vice-Chancellor, University of Ilorin. Goodwill messages were delivered by: the Deputy Secretary General, United Nations (via video message); West and Central African Research and Education Network (WACREN); representatives of the Registrar, Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board; the Executive Secretary, National Universities Commission, Abuja, Nigeria. Head of Sustainable Development Goals, Niger Republic also graced the occasion to deliver the keynote address. Other dignitaries present at the occasion from the host country were: Minister for Vocational Education, Special Adviser to the Minister of Higher Education and representative of the Ambassador of Spain to Niger Republic. Lead papers and other contributions to the theme of the conference were delivered in form of paper presentations at plenary sessions.

2.0 Observations

The Conference observed that:

- i. Universities all over the world have a very critical role to play in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The need for Universities in the West African sub-region to spearhead the drive cannot be overemphasized in order to avoid repeating the failures associated with the erstwhile Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in many African countries.

- ii. Most of the researches in Africa have not been directed sufficiently to search for continental solutions to health, education, water, climate change, energy and food security which are all components of the SDGs.
- iii. Multidisciplinary research as well as collaboration and networking among Higher Education Institutions in the Subregion are vital instruments that can be used to achieve the SDGs.
- iv. Internet connectivity cost in higher education institutions (HEIs) and research institutes is still very high in West African Subregion. The cost of subscription to very relevant databases is also very high.
- v. Migration is an issue of concern for the International Community and a threat to the attainment of the SDGs. It is very high in the West African sub-region as a result of urbanisation, insecurity, economic hardship, and policies of some member states.
- vi. Education of the Girl-Child is important for the attainment of SDGs. The problem associated with Girl-Child education has historical and cultural bases.
- vii. Climate change is a reality and a Global phenomenon that has direct relationship with the attainment of SDGs. Adaptation to climate change is another challenge and a key component that makes contribution to the long term global response to climate change.
- viii. Few institutional frameworks, such as the West African Science Service Centre on Climate Change and Adapted Land Use (WASCAL), exist in the West African Sub-region to address climate change.
- ix. Employment and employability of graduates of HEIs are related to their training and economic activities in the society.
- x. Adequate funding by proprietors of HEIs to meet the requirement of human and material resources for training also has implications for graduate employability.
- xi. Food security and provision of basic health services and facilities still remain a challenge in West African sub-region.

3.0 Recommendations and Resolutions

1. AWAU should liaise with member States to ensure that teaching and research in their Universities are geared towards achieving the SDGs.
2. Universities in AWAU member countries should explore other means of getting internet service and access to relevant databases, such as Africa Connect2, at low cost. The West and Central African Research and Education Network (WACREN) should also provide a central network for accessing relevant databases by HEIs in West Africa.
3. AWAU should encourage governments of member countries to strengthen their institutional and legal frameworks to reduce migration in order to achieve the SDGs.
4. AWAU should ensure that curriculum of Universities promote gender equality and empowers women and girls in professional fields such as medicine, engineering and technical/vocational education. AWAU should also advocate and support inclusive educational policies in member States.
5. AWAU has an important role to play in combating climate change and promoting sustainable development by making the Universities responsive to local and regional needs; mobilising stakeholders across the world to establish more institutional frameworks; organise and encourage information dissemination and policy dialogue on climate change mitigation and adaptation in Africa and collect.
6. There is the need for periodic review of tertiary education curriculum by the relevant agencies to meet national needs and global demands.
7. AWAU should explore the opportunity of partnering with CBOs, NGOs, national and International Development Agencies and Institutions to tackle health and food security challenges in the West African sub-region.

4.0 Appreciation

The Conference expressed its profound appreciation and gratitude to the people of Niger Republic, particularly the Minister of Higher Education,

Research and Innovation, Malam Yahouza Sadissou and the management and staff of the host institution Universite Abdou Moumouni, Niamey for the wonderful reception accorded the participants. The Conference also extended its gratitude to Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board; University of Ilorin, Nigeria; Federal University of Technology, Minna, Nigeria; Sule Lamido University, Kafin Hausa, Nigeria and National Open University of Nigeria for providing invaluable support towards the successful organisation of the conference.

Signed:

Prof. Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu, FCVSN

Vice-Chancellor, Sule Lamido University, Kafin Hausa

& Secretary-General, AWAU