PRESIDENT KENYATTA URGED IUCEA TO EXPEDITE THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGIONAL QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORK

NEWS RELEASE

Inter-University Council for East Africa IUCEA, Kampala, Uganda, 30th March 2014: The President of Kenya, HE Uhuru Kenyatta urged IUCEA to expedite the development of the Regional Qualifications Framework.

“I am aware that transforming East Africa into a common higher education area by 2015 as the East African Community envisions is a formidable task. But as a step towards achieving that goal, I would like to urge the Inter-University Council for East Africa to expedite the development of the Regional Qualifications Framework. This will mark an important step forward”. The President told the delegates who attended the 5th IUCEA Annual Meeting which took place in Mombasa, Kenya, under the theme “Towards an East African Common Higher Education Area” in his opening statement read by Cabinet Secretary for East African Affairs, Commerce and Tourism, Kenya, Honourable Phyllis Kandie who represented him.

The President said that the transformation of East Africa into a common higher education area is one of the aspirations necessary to operationalize the EAC Common Market Protocol, commending the theme of the meeting in raising awareness among higher education stakeholders on what the transformation entails and what the IUCEA has already achieved in that process.

As key leaders of higher education institutions mandated to spearhead strategic development of education in the region, the President urged the delegates that as they strive to develop regional higher education systems, they should take note of the challenges which higher education institutions
face in their quest to meet stakeholders’ demands for regional economic growth.

Commending the IUCEA’s efforts and progress made in developing regional quality assurance systems which will lead into harmonization of higher education and training, the President said a lot remains to be done since education is a dynamic process and there was a need to keep up with the emerging trends.

In his statement, the Secretary General of the East African Community, Amb. Dr. Richard Sezibera, recognized the roles of IUCEA in developing several regional frameworks and systems that are geared toward harmonization of higher education systems in the Community which are part of the initiatives to operationalize the EAC Common Market Protocol. As IUCEA continues to carry out its functions as expected, Ambassador Sezibera noted that IUCEA needs a more appropriate legal instrument to guide the implementation of its activities, particularly the operationalization of EAC Common Market Protocol, development of frameworks and systems for harmonization of higher education and coordination of research.

With the rapid expansion of higher education in East Africa, Ambassador Sezibera emphasized the importance of IUCEA to speed up the process of accomplishing the development of EAC Common Higher Education Area through harmonization of education systems. Looking forward to the completion of the development of a regional qualifications framework, Ambassador Sezibera said that it would facilitate mobility of higher education students across the region and allow mutual recognition of academic and professional qualifications in the region. The Secretary General appreciated universities which are admitting students from all Partner States and according them same treatment as students of the host country. He requested those who have not yet embraced that spirit to do so.
Ambassador Sezibera appreciated the collaboration and partnership between IUCEA and the national commissions and councils for higher education in the EAC Partner States in realizing important milestones for the development of higher education area by 2015 as planned.

Emphasizing the importance of stakeholders’ input in the process of transforming East Africa into a Common Higher Education Area, the Secretary General committed EAC support to IUCEA in realizing that goal, as he saw it as clear demonstrated by the development of quality assurance system that is spearheaded by IUCEA.

In his welcoming statement, the Executive Secretary of the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) Prof. Mayunga Nkuny, told the Guest of Honour that the Annual meeting was particularly important especially at the moment when the region was undergoing a number of transformational reforms that the East African Community continues to articulate.

He told the Guest of Honour that EAC has continued to establish systems for operationalization of the four pillars of East Africa’s regional integration, namely Customs Union, Common Market, Monetary Union, and Political Federation, which he referred to have a direct bearing on how IUCEA should continue to be repositioned in order to be part of the regional integration process, the reason why IUCEA saw the need for a shift in the IUCEA operational paradigm, such that the institution focuses more on the development of higher education and research for supporting East Africa’s socio-economic development and the regional integration process.

Mentioning achievement of the IUCEA mission, Prof. Nkuny told the Guest of Honour that the Council has been addressing challenges in four key strategic areas, namely:

a) Expansion of higher education access opportunities in order for the region to catch up with the expanding socio-economic horizon.
b) Developing systems for safeguarding the quality of higher education in order to promote the region’s international competitiveness.

c) Promoting graduate employability and entrepreneurship.

d) Developing systems for harmonization of higher education for supporting regional integration.

During the meeting IUCEA made a presentation of results from a recent study on the status of higher education in the region, which is guiding the development of a regional qualifications framework in higher education for East Africa.

The annual meeting also elected members of IUCEA Executive Committee for the next two years starting from July 2014. Dr. Janviere Ndirahisha from Burundi was elected IUCEA Chairperson, while Prof. Ephata Kaaya from Tanzania was elected Vice Chairperson. Other members elected include Bishop Dr. Bates (Burundi), Dr. Annette Munga (Tanzania), Prof. Elly Katongoka and Prof. Sengendo representing Uganda, Prof. James Makwa and Dr. Jean Ngamije (Rwanda), Prof. Ngumo Gitau and Prof. Fredrick Otieno (Kenya).

Every year IUCEA holds an annual meeting which comprises heads of IUCEA member universities, Permanent Secretaries of Ministries responsible for higher education, heads of national commissions and councils for higher education, heads of national commissions and councils for science and technology from all EAC Partner States, representatives of East African Business Council in each Partner State, students and other higher education stakeholders. During the Annual Meeting, participants take stock of the progress made in implementing IUCEA activities. The Annual Meeting also creates an environment for exchange of information and experiences on higher education and research matters in the region. It also develops strategies for the achievement of the IUCEA mission.
Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) is an EAC institution whose mission is to promote strategic and sustainable development of higher education systems and research for supporting East Africa’s socio-economic development and regional integration. Its vision is to become an EAC strategic institution responsible for promoting, developing and coordinating human resources development and research in the region. The objectives of IUCEA are to facilitate networking among universities in East Africa, and with universities outside the region; provide a forum for discussion on a wide range of academic and other matters relating to higher education in East Africa; and facilitate the maintenance of internationally comparable higher education standards in East Africa so as to promote the region's competitiveness.

The functions of IUCEA include advising the EAC Partner States on higher education matters so as to contribute to meeting national and regional developmental needs, coordinating inter-university cooperation in East Africa, and promoting internationally comparable higher education standards and systems for sustainable regional development. The current IUCEA membership is 100 university institutions.