



ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITÉS AFRICAINES

إتحاد الجامعات الإفريقية

ADDRESS OF THE
PRESIDENT OF THE ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES (AAU)
Professor Orlando Antonio QUILAMBO
AT THE
INAUGURATION OF THE
EAST AFRICA REGIONAL OFFICE OF THE AAU
Khartoum, Sudan, March 14, 2018

- The Minister of Higher Education of the Republic of Sudan
- The Representative, African Union Commission
- The Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities
- The President, University of Khartoum
- Special Invited Guests
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen
- All Protocol Observed

It gives me the greatest pleasure, in my capacity as the President of the Association of African Universities (AAU), to welcome you to this historic gathering marking the inauguration of the pioneer regional hub of the AAU, which is the East Africa Regional Office that is being hosted here in Sudan by University of Khartoum.

In its fifty (50) years of existence, the AAU has been centrally coordinated from its headquarters which has been situated in Accra, Ghana since 1970. From this uni-location, it has reached out to all corners of the continent with its programmes and interventions for the African higher education community. Yet, you and I will agree that the higher education terrain in Africa is coming more and more diverse, which calls for a more proactive way of interacting among ourselves, with the productive sector, and with the outside world.

For Africa's higher education institutions to remain relevant and compete favourably with others, particularly in our internationalization drive to attract quality staff, students from diversity of backgrounds and produce relevant research that addresses societal problems, we have to first network among ourselves with a common understanding that in our unity lies our strength. This confirms an African proverb that says that "*sticks in a bundle are unbreakable*", and yet another from Tanzania which says that "*two ants do not fail to pull one grasshopper*".

The idea of establishing regional hubs of the AAU is to speed up not just the visibility of the Association's programmes but more importantly to facilitate effective networking

among ourselves first at the country levels, sub-regional levels and then at the continental level. The current AAU Board has assigned itself to pursue this agenda during its four-year mandate. As an initial step, the Association is organizing an international conference on Strengthening Partnerships for Delivery Capacity of Higher Education in Africa in Ghana in September this year.

We, as a Higher Education community in Africa are confronted with a challenge – managing a growing youthful population that is expected to continue to grow throughout the remainder of the 21st century, more than doubling from current levels by 2055. Comparatively, Africa has relatively few universities. According to a 2015 report by Quartz Africa, there were a little over 740 universities serving some 660 million of Africa's 1 billion people in the top 10 most populous countries on the continent. On the other hand, the United States of America had about 5,300 universities and colleges serving a population of over 323 million people.

Given our limited infrastructural and human resources, how do we turn these huge resource potentials in our youth into something productive for the development of Africa? The answer lies with us, the institutions of higher learning on the continent. Building strategic and effective partnerships, collaborations and alliances remains, perhaps, the surest possible way for the continent to fast-track its development agenda and be in league with other regional competitors. And this is what we are doing here today in Khartoum.

The establishment of the regional office of the AAU will help us effectively network among ourselves in the sub-region while we look up to the Association's headquarters for effective leadership and collaboration with other regional networks and global linkages.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, the AAU is grateful to our host country, Sudan, for the East African AAU Office, which is the citadel of the conception of the AAU in the immediate post independent Africa. The Association was founded in November 1967 at a conference in Rabat, Morocco which hosted representatives of 34 universities but preceding this conference were consultative meetings of executive heads of African universities in Antananarivo, Madagascar in 1962 and another a year later, in 1963, here in Khartoum, Sudan. This was a turnaround meeting that drew the roadmap for the 1967 conference in Rabat. Khartoum has played a significant role, and it is not a coincidence that this great country should host the first regional office of the AAU.

Our sincere gratitude goes to the President of the Republic of Sudan, the Ministry of Higher Education, the President of this University and Local Organizing Committee who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that this office is firmly established, and all other players who have made today an historic moment for the Association of African Universities.

On behalf of the Board and entire membership of the AAU, we say SHUKRAAN.