



ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES
ASSOCIATION DES UNIVERSITÉS AFRICAINES
اتحاد الجامعات الافريقية

WELCOME ADDRESS OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE
ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES (AAU), PROFESSOR ETIENNE
E. EHILE, AT THE NINTH AFRICA CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE PROJECT
WORKSHOP

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, May 7-9, 2018

Hon. Minister of Higher Education, Scientific Research and Innovation for Burkina-
Faso, Professor Alkassoum MAÏGA

The World Bank Country Manager for Burkina Faso – Mr. Cheick F. KANTE

The World Bank ACE Task Team Leader, Mr. Andreas Blom

All World Bank Staff here present

The ECOWAS Commissioner for Education, Prof. Leopoldo AMADO

PSC Chair, Prof. Ramane KABORE

Members of the ACE Project Steering Committee & National Focal Persons

ACE Project Vice Chancellors

Subject matter experts

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen

All Protocol Observed

On behalf of the Association of African Universities, I warmly welcome you all to
the Ninth Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence (ACE) Project
Workshop.

First of all, I wish to thank the Government of Burkina Faso and 2iE for hosting us
here in Ouagadougou for this important meeting. The AAU, and indeed all partners
of the ACE project appreciate the interest and commitment demonstrated by
governments of the nine countries participating in the ACE project.

Also, I congratulate the organizers and all the ACEs for a successful fair yesterday. Monday, May 7, 2018 marked the commencement of a new initiative of the ACE Project. The Maiden ACE Higher Education Fair was launched to provide an interactive platform for students and faculty and also create an avenue for the ACEs to promote their activities and programmes both locally and internationally.

Apart from the ACEs and their stakeholders, industry stakeholders as well as students and faculty from other higher education institutions were present. The Fair, is a good initiative and I encourage us all to support subsequent ones as we did yesterday.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I must say, that I am very impressed by the growth of the ACEs and I commend their efforts towards transforming the continent through quality education and applied research.

Our gathering today and tomorrow for the Project Workshop, is to discuss pertinent issues concerning the ACE project, to update ourselves on its status and share ideas on ways of improving the Project's mechanisms and procedures.

This workshop also presents us with the opportunity to identify and resolve any existing problems that may be preventing the effective implementation of the ACE project.

This task requires our collective wisdom and serious consideration. It is therefore vital that the exchange of views at this meeting be candid, open and constructive, as has been in the past.

Distinguished guests, in a short while, updates on various facets of the project, including disbursements and funds utilisation, DLRs achieved so far, monitoring and evaluation progress report, among others, will be presented. I am pleased to say that,

substantial progress has been made since our last meeting in Accra in November 2017.

Indeed, improving the quality of African higher education and research is very essential to the core mandate of the AAU and receives priority attention in the Strategic Plan and Core Program of the Association.

The AAU believes that sound, strategic investments in higher education and research in Africa will pay off in the form of strong academic institutions and their societal engagement. Such investments have many benefits, including contributing to the development of countries' intellectual resources, competent workforces, visionary leaders, gender equality and respect for basic human rights.

I take this opportunity to assure this august meeting of the AAU's strong commitment to ensuring that the objectives and goals of the ACE Project are achieved with the support of the World Bank and other stakeholders.

I am hopeful that our discussions these two days will positively contribute to the consolidation of the ACE project's aims and the philosophy underlying it, which is to promote regional specialization in disciplinary fields to address regional development challenges and also to meet the demand for skills required for Africa's development.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I will like to end my delivery by extending a special thanks to all parties who have worked tirelessly to make this workshop a success.

I wish you all fruitful deliberations.

Thank you for your attention.