



African Continental  
Qualifications Framework

Supporting and connecting Qualifications Frameworks  
Transparency and Mutual Trust in qualifications  
Facilitating lifelong learning and mobility



African Continental  
Qualifications Framework

# Session 5: Linkages and Complementarities between Recognition and Qualifications Frameworks

The Maputo Conference  
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# Presentation Outline



Why Technical Note on Linkages between Recognition and Qualifications Frameworks?



Recalling Key Concepts and Definitions



Points of Intersection and Synergy between Qualifications Frameworks and Recognition



Use of Information on Qualifications Frameworks in Recognition Processes



Information-sharing, Building Trust: Network of National Implementation Structures



Main Benefits and Beneficiaries of Effective Linkages between Recognition, NQFs and ACQF



Main Experiences From Lisbon and Tokyo Recognition Conventions



Proposals from ACQF-II Project Concerning Collaboration with the Addis Recognition Convention

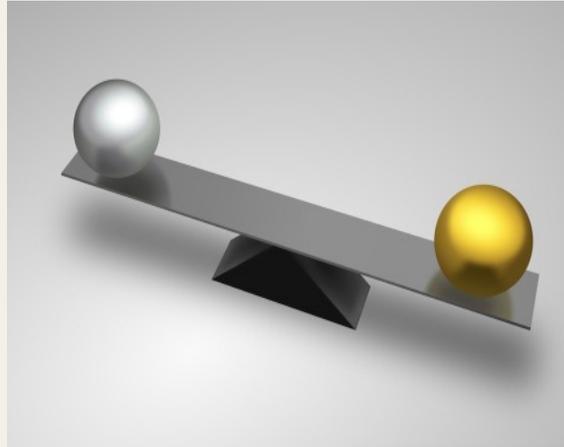


Challenges in Recognition of Qualifications in Africa



Recommendations

# Why Technical Note on Linkages between Recognition and Qualifications Frameworks?



Contribute to transparency, comparability and quality qualifications

Promote cooperation and referencing b/n NQFs and RQFs



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# Recalling Key Concepts and Definitions

## National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs)

- A national qualifications framework (NQF) is 'A **policy and instrument** for the **development** and **classification of qualifications** according to a set of criteria for specified levels of learning achieved, which aims at **integrating and coordinating national qualifications subsystems** and improve the transparency, access, progression and quality of qualifications in relation to the **labour market and civil society**'.

Source: [EQF Recommendation 2017](#)

## Regional Qualifications Frameworks (RQFs)

A Regional Qualifications Framework is a broad structure of levels of learning outcomes that is agreed by countries in a geographical region. It is a means of **enabling one national framework of qualifications to relate to another** and, subsequently, for a qualification in one country to be compared to a qualification from another country (ACQF, EQF, etc.) – regional perspective.

**The international dimension of both national and regional qualifications frameworks is that they support mutual recognition and the transparency of qualifications across different jurisdictions.**

# Recalling Key Concepts and Definitions...cont'd

## Recognition of Qualifications

- Recognition of qualifications is a formal acknowledgement by a competent recognition authority regarding the validity and academic level of a foreign education qualification, partial studies or prior learning/ acquired experience (ACQF 2022, Guideline 4).
- Recognition of qualifications aims to provide an applicant with outcomes, including, but not limited to, the right to apply for admission to further education or training and the possibility to seek employment opportunities.

## Steps in the Recognition Process



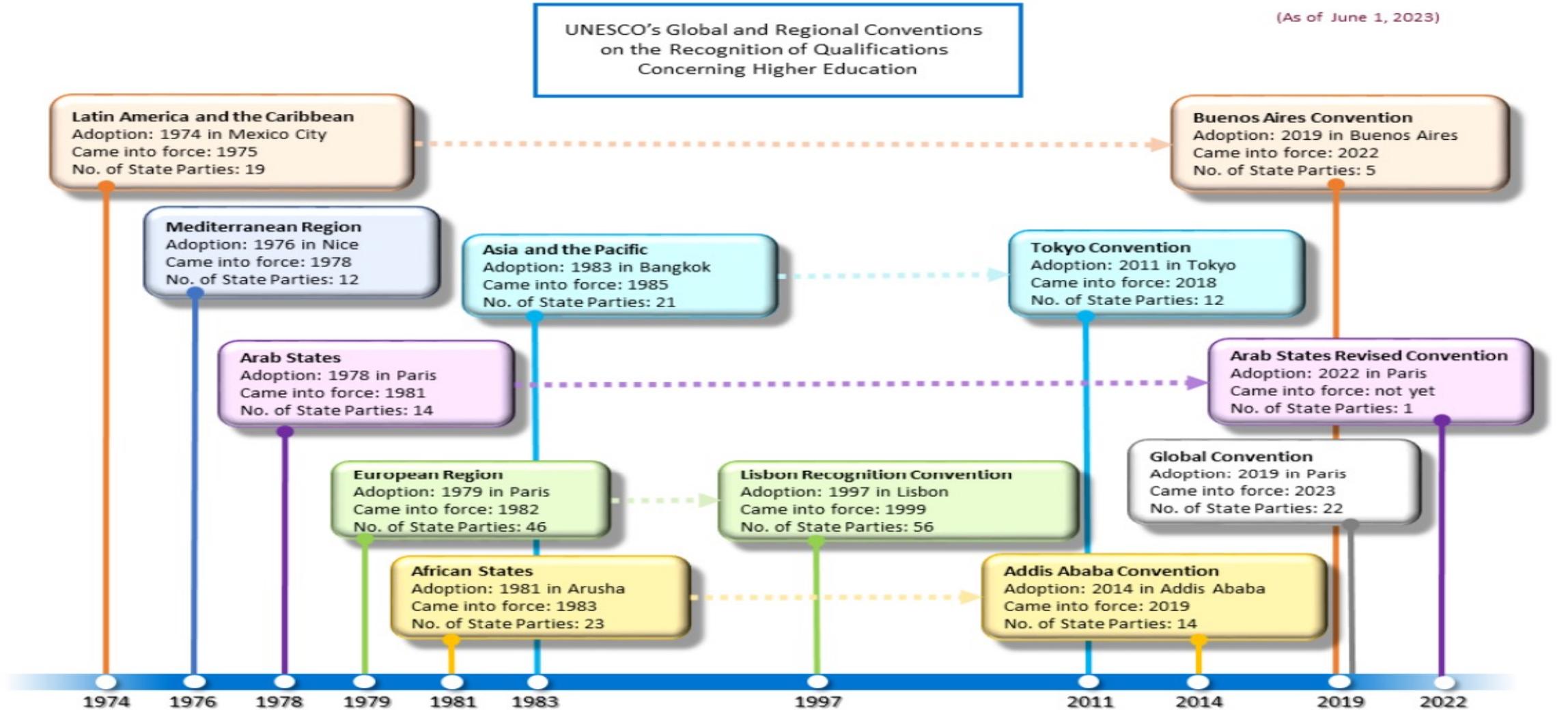
# Key Concepts and Definitions...cont'd

## Regional Recognition Conventions

Regional Recognition Conventions are legally binding agreements between States in a given region.

The main objectives of the conventions are to promote international cooperation in higher education and to reduce obstacles to the mobility of teachers and students through mutual recognition of qualifications by the countries that are ratified by them.

By ratifying the Addis Recognition Convention and the Global Convention, African Member States commit to strengthening bilateral and international cooperation in higher education, raising its quality at home and worldwide, and helping make academic and labour mobility, as well as the recognition of qualifications a reality for millions on the continent and beyond.



Source: <https://www.nicjp.niad.ac.jp/en/site/unesco-conventions.html>

# Points of Intersection and Synergy between Qualifications Frameworks and Recognition

## Confidence and Trust

- National Qualifications Frameworks are important information and transparency tools in the recognition of qualifications.
- They play a key role in providing clear information to local and international stakeholders on qualifications issued within a country, as well as the existing quality assurance arrangements, so as to build confidence and trust in the qualifications

## Lifelong Learning

- From a lifelong learning point of view, NQFs can also facilitate the recognition of prior learning, since they describe qualifications in terms of learning outcomes independently from learning paths

## Referencing

- NQFs facilitate recognition especially when they have been linked in a transparent and comparative way – through referencing to the regional frameworks, such as the ACQF.
- The positioning of qualifications within the NQF of the awarding country and their relation to one or more regional frameworks gives important information to facilitate the recognition processes

# Use of Information on Qualifications Frameworks in Recognition Processes

According to the ARC under Article IV.8, 3 on National Implementation Structures, “Parties agree to make use of national and regional qualifications frameworks, where they exist, in the recognition processes”.

Fair recognition can only be a reality if reliable information on NQFs and RQFs is made available in a timely and consistent manner. Therefore, countries are encouraged to:

Provide details and links to national registers of approved providers and registered qualifications

Make available details of NQFs, including qualification levels, level descriptors and qualification types

Make accessible details of quality assurance bodies and quality assurance processes – including policies, guidelines and procedures

Reference their NQFs to RQFs, and use NQF and RQF levels on national qualifications documents

Use qualification/ diploma supplements

# Information-sharing, Building Trust: Network of National Implementation Structures

In order to ensure comparability and recognition of qualifications, and support mobility and progression of students across the continent and beyond, African countries need to put in place mechanisms for sharing of information pertaining to recognition of qualifications in their jurisdictions, as per the following ARC provisions:

Article IV.3 of the ARC which states that, “Each Party shall ensure that the procedures and criteria used in the assessment and recognition of qualifications are transparent, coherent, reliable, fair and non-discriminatory, in particular, by making public such procedures and criteria”

Article IV.4 of the ARC also emphasises the need for information sharing with competent recognition authorities and qualification holders

Article IV.5 backs up the preceding article by stating that, “Each Party shall ensure, that in order to facilitate the recognition of qualifications, adequate and clear information on its education system is provided”

ARC under Article IV.8,5 on National Implementation Structures, where it is stated that, “Parties, in order to reinforce exchanges of information on recognition of qualifications in higher education, agree to have a system to collect and disseminate information and successful experiences as regards recognition of qualifications, as well as mechanisms for quality assurance and accreditation of institutions and programmes.

Article IV.10 on African Network of National Implementation Structures which states that, “1. A network of national implementation structures providing information on mobility and recognition shall be established”

# Information-sharing, Building Trust: Network of National Implementation Structures

- The African Network of National Implementation Structures launched on 15th September 2022.
- The network brings together recognition authorities from the 14 States Parties of the Addis Convention for Africa, with the aim to promote exchange of information, capacity development and peer learning in order to strengthen recognition and academic mobility on the continent.
- Need to operationalise the network and synergies with other already existing networks.



# Main Benefits and Beneficiaries of Effective Linkages between Recognition, NQFs And ACQF

## Benefits

- They provide a mechanism for countries in to facilitate recognition of qualifications on the basic principles of greater information and transparency.
- They make student mobility more attractive as an opportunity to upgrade their learning, acquire skills and knowledge in an international environment, which in turn impacts on the productivity and social transformation of their societies.
- The linkages guarantee efficient, transparent, accessible and effective student and labour mobility.
- They contribute to the establishment of equitable, symmetrical and important regional integration, based on solidary academic cooperation.
- They offer transparent and updated information on institutions, curricular content and performance profile, which inspires confidence among higher education actors.

## Beneficiaries

- Policy makers – central governments/ ministries/ departments/ agencies.
- Competent recognition authorities/ NQF Authorities.
- Credential evaluators.
- Professional bodies.
- Education and training institutions.
- Quality assurance bodies/ sector regulators.
- Students.
- Employers.
- Prospective employees.
- Recruitment agencies.

# Main Experiences from Lisbon and Tokyo Recognition Conventions

## Lisbon Convention

- The Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, also known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) is the key legal instrument regulating recognition of higher education qualifications from abroad across Europe and North American regions and was adopted in 1997.
- It aims to ensure that holders of a qualification from a signatory country can have adequate access to an assessment of the qualification in another country in a fair, flexible, and transparent way.
- The LRC emphasises that a foreign qualification must be recognised unless the recognising authority (in most cases a higher education institution) can demonstrate that the foreign qualification is substantially different from a national qualification that would grant access to the desired learning activity (typically an academic programme).

## Tokyo Convention

- The Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education, also referred to as Tokyo Convention, was adopted in November 2011 in Tokyo, Japan.
- It is the second generation of the Asia-Pacific Convention and a replacement to the Bangkok Convention which was adopted in 1983 in Bangkok, Thailand.
- It is a key requirement that after the Tokyo Convention enters into force at the national level, parties to the convention need to identify competent recognition authorities. These recognition authorities can be ministries, specialised agencies, higher education institutions and employers, depending on whether systems are of a centralised or decentralised nature.

# Lisbon Recognition Convention: Subsidiary Text June 2013 (1)

- Subsidiary Text: “RECOMMENDATION ON THE USE OF QUALIFICATIONS FRAMEWORKS IN THE RECOGNITION OF FOREIGN QUALIFICATIONS”
- Council of Europe and UNESCO aim to achieve greater unity between their members

## III. Recommendations

- 1. The competent recognition authorities, and the ENIC Network should develop a common understanding on how to use national, European or other overarching qualifications frameworks for the purpose of facilitating the fair recognition of qualifications and should identify the opportunities and challenges they present.
- 2. Qualifications frameworks should be used to make it easier for competent recognition authorities to assess foreign qualifications.
- 3. Qualifications frameworks should be used while considering the five key elements in recognition: level, learning outcomes, quality, workload and profile. However, qualifications frameworks provide limited information to support the recognition process when it comes to the profile of a qualification.
- 4. The following principles should apply to assure the effective use of qualifications frameworks in recognition practice:

# Subsidiary Text June 2013 (2)

## Level

1. If a National Qualifications Framework has been self-certified or referenced, there is, as a general rule, no need for the competent recognition authority to investigate the level of qualifications further;
2. In the case that qualifications have been referenced/self-certified towards the same level in overarching frameworks, they should be seen as broadly compatible.

## Learning outcomes

1. The learning outcomes of National Qualifications Frameworks and of overarching qualifications frameworks are generic and provide a reference point for recognition;
2. In cases where the learning outcomes provided by the qualifications frameworks are insufficient for recognition purposes, the more detailed descriptions of learning outcomes provided by institutions should be used. The description of learning outcomes in the Diploma Supplement or other documents is useful for recognition purposes.

## Quality

1. A transparent link between recognition, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance should be established;
2. If a National Qualifications Framework has been self-certified or referenced, there is an assumption that the individual qualifications included in the framework by the competent authority are quality assured. Therefore, as a general rule, there is no need for the recognition authority to investigate the quality of the qualification.

## Workload

While recognising that qualifications should as far as possible be assessed on the basis of learning outcomes, competent recognition authorities may also be guided in their assessment by the workload learners are assumed to require in order to obtain the given qualification. This is normally expressed as credits and indicates the typical workload expected to achieve the learning outcomes associated with a qualification.

# Cross-cutting Experiences/ Lessons

- Having champions in the ministries and competent authorities concerned with recognition of qualifications is key to the ratification process. These champions should be identified, empowered and incentivised to initiate the ratification processes in the countries as they are in the driver's seat to engage with domestic and international stakeholders and experts for consensus-building and technical back-up.
- The development of strong narratives about the benefits of joining Regional and Global Recognition Conventions are extremely important for convincing national policy-makers and other stakeholders to support the ratification process.
- Recognition Conventions require information transparency on qualifications from different countries. Information transparency with regard to quality assurance and qualifications frameworks is critical. This allows learning outcomes to be compared for a substantial difference check that can lead to a recognition decision.
- Qualifications frameworks should be used to make it easier for competent recognition authorities to assess foreign qualifications. Qualifications frameworks should be used while considering the five key elements in recognition: level, learning outcomes, quality, workload and profile.

## Cross-cutting Experiences/ Lessons...cont'd

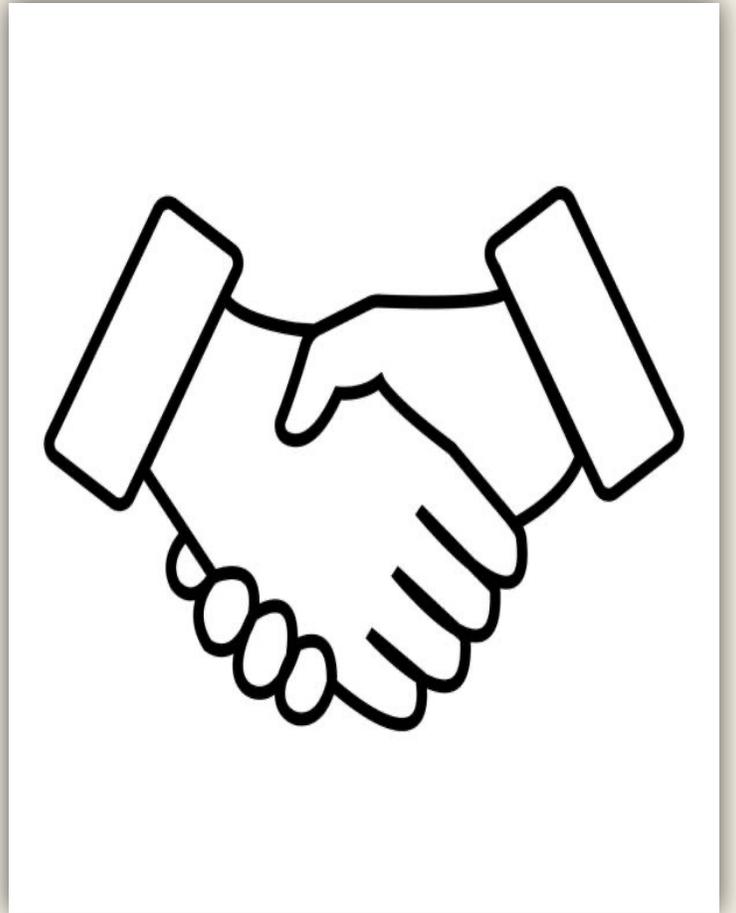
- Political commitment is critical for facilitating the ratification of Recognition Conventions. In many cases, this commitment is simply a matter of prioritising the ratification among other pressing issues on the government agenda to get the processes truly up and running.
- It is notable that ratifications of Recognition Conventions begin with countries with large numbers of inbound and outbound international students, as these countries have already got a big stake in the implementation of the Conventions. However, countries with fewer international students need to follow suit, if the importance of fair recognition for promoting inclusive and equitable access to quality higher education for all is to be felt on the African continent and beyond.
- There is no need to reinvent the wheel in implementing the Recognition Conventions as an integrated approach toward using and upgrading existing national entities and mechanisms could prove to be the most expeditious way forward.
- Diploma supplements are a critical tool in the recognition of qualifications in Europe. It would be worthwhile implementing them on the African continent.

## Cross-cutting Experiences/ Lessons...cont'd

- Recognition of refugees' qualifications and micro-credentials should form part and parcel of recognition procedures and processes.
- Bilateral agreements are a sure way of promoting automatic recognition of qualifications among countries and regions – quality assured once, recognised everywhere.
- It is important to take into consideration the purpose of recognition when assessing a foreign qualification, in order to ensure that the assessment is accurate and relevant.
- Digitisation of recognition processes is aiding the effective and efficient recognition of qualifications.
- Recognition decisions can hinder or facilitate cross-border mobility of students and professionals.

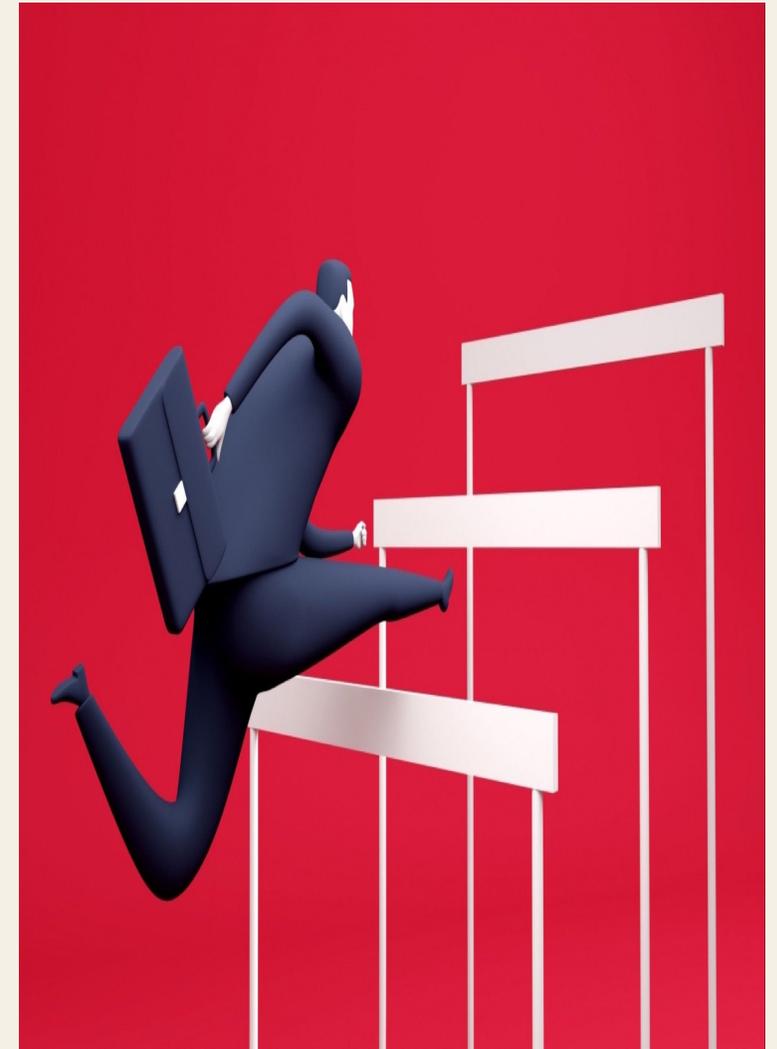
## Proposals from ACQF-II Project Concerning Collaboration with the Addis Recognition Convention

- 1) Development and publication of a Technical Note on Linkages and Complementarities – ARC, ACQF and NQFs
- 2) Creation of a website for African Network of National Implementation Structures for information sharing purposes
- 3) ARCC to ride on the ACQF workshops and conferences as platforms for advocacy on ratification of the ARC.



# Challenges in the Recognition of Qualifications in Africa

- 1) Absence of NQFs or well elaborated NQSs in some jurisdictions
- 2) Inadequate, and in some cases, lack of reliable information on education systems, qualifications/ LPs, institutions (regulatory and awarding) - including QA mechanisms
- 3) Differences in structures, content and duration of qualifications
- 4) Delays in receiving confirmations to verification requests
- 5) Diploma and accreditation mills - remain real threats
- 6) Absence of a **fully functioning** continental network to champion the sharing of information for recognition purposes
- 7) Limited capacities amongst credential/ qualification verifiers/ evaluators
- 8) Lack of clear guidelines and procedures to inform the recognition process
- 9) Slow efforts towards ratification of ARC, GRC and referencing to regional QFs.



# Recommendations

- 1) Ratification and domestication of ARC and GRC by all African Member States
- 2) Establishment of Competent Recognition Authorities and National Implementation Structures
- 3) Operationalisation of the African Network of National Implementation Structures and creation of synergies with other networks that have been developed for recognition purposes
- 4) Development and implementation of NQFs – leveraging on the ACQF and other initiatives
- 5) Referencing of NQFs and RQFs to ACQF – no need to linger



## Recommendations...cont'd

- 6) Use of NQF, RQF and ACQF levels on qualification documents
- 7) Introduction of qualification supplements to ease the recognition process
- 8) Intensify collective efforts towards the recognition of qualifications for refugees and displaced persons
- 9) Automatic recognition – setting the ball rolling
- 10) Take more pragmatic steps towards the recognition of micro-credentials in Africa – need to build on past discussions and engagements.



**THANK**

**YOU!**