



Burkina Faso



African Union

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African Heads of States approve the initiative of Burkina Faso to promote critical knowledge and skills for the accelerated development of Africa

The Assembly of African Heads of State and Government approved on Monday January 28, 2013 an initiative taken by Burkina Faso to promote critical skills on the African continent for accelerated and sustainable development in Africa.

In a statement read by Burkina Faso's Minister of Education, Dr. Koumba Boly Barry, on behalf of President Blaise Compaoré, who was also present in the session, the Government of Burkina Faso made some concrete proposals that bear on the promotion of critical skills for accelerated and sustainable development in Africa. The statement took cognizance of the Education Triennial that Burkina Faso hosted in Ouagadougou from 12 – 17 February, 2012 in partnership with the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) on the theme: "Promoting critical knowledge, skills and qualifications for the sustainable development of Africa: how to design and implement an effective response by education and training systems".

In the statement, President Compaoré reminded his peers about the strategic policy framework that has already been defined during the Education Triennial held in Ouagadougou. This framework, according to this statement, capitalizes on the principal lessons learned from the analysis of experiences on education and training policies in Africa and elsewhere in the world. It is indispensable for Africa to promote its own stock of critical skills in order to accomplish the structural changes and qualitative leaps needed to attain higher heights in her development agenda, the statement assumed. The Triennial therefore constituted the platform from where Africa would form the basis for the ownership of her own development, since the future of the continent will depend essentially on the capacity of its peoples to execute its innovations and necessary social transformations. For this, the statement went on, it is urgent to clearly identify these competencies and to determine the reforms to be undertaken in our education and training systems, so that they can be capable to support the acceleration and sustainability of development on the continent through the utilization of adequate human resources of good quality.

President Compaoré noted that it is time for a fundamental change as the traditional models of technical and vocational training are no longer meeting the enormous needs of Africa's young majority population. Africa should therefore promote "a new system that is more inclusive and more diversified, more flexible and more reactive to developments so as to allow for the inclusion of a maximum number of persons to train and to qualify in development issues".

Noting that the 2012 Triennial put employment and growth at the heart of policies with regard to the development of technical and vocational skills, the President told his peers that an important segment of Africa's population are still illiterate and require vocational and technical training. There is therefore the need to respond to these with training in the national languages through professionalized literacy programmes. They should also take into account the needs and requirements of employers so as to adapt the newly acquired skills to demands. This should facilitate their transition from training to the world of work. Besides, youth training must be oriented towards the development of capacities that would allow self-employment and entrepreneurship in a favorable environment.

The Ouagadougou meeting devoted science, technology and research as essential factors for the promotion of capacities for innovation and development in Africa. President Compaoré reminded his peers that Africa is behind in scientific and technical skills, and she needs to bridge this gap very rapidly. Initiatives already taken by Africans in the Diaspora as well as by certain business enterprises show that those potentialities that will allow the continent to take its rightful place in a globalised knowledge and skills economy exist. Africa must therefore invest more to develop its scientific, technological and innovation skills so as to valorize its assets and remain committed to the process of accelerated and sustainable development. President Compaoré recommended to his peers that to attain these, Africa must first expose to a large extent a scientific culture in its entire education and training system; second, link the development of scientific competencies to the search for solutions to development challenges of African societies and their economies; and third, pool resources for effective and sustainable responses to common challenges and demands of high-tech sectors and highly specialized areas of science and technology.

As the designated spokesperson of the participants at the 2012 Triennial, President Blaise Compaoré told the gathering that the Triennial is seeking a determined commitment from African states to implement coherent and ambitious education policies that would be consistent with Africa's future development perspectives. He then made the following recommendations:

- The adoption of a holistic vision of skills development that will open possibilities and opportunities for an education that goes well beyond the formal school;
- The promotion of a strategic approach in education and training policies;
- The repositioning of equity and quality of education and training as the basis for development through providing opportunities that are consistent with needs to each and everyone's success in learning.
- The integration of cultural, linguistic, historical and spiritual heritage of Africa;
- The establishment of a scientific culture in the education and training systems;
- The promotion of life-long learning;
- The integration of Information Technology and Communication (ITC) in education, training and learning;
- The setting up of critical conditions for the successful implementation of reforms.

The 20th Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) Summit holding on the theme: “Pan-Africanism and African Renaissance” ended Monday 28 January 2013 at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with commitment by the AU Heads of State and Government to ensure implementation of the Assembly Decisions and Declarations arrived at during their deliberations.

The two day summit discussed a range of issues ranging from conflicts and peace and security in Africa to economic and social development issues bordering on trade, health and education on the continent. In his closing remarks, the newly elected Chairperson of the African Union, Mr. Hailemariam Dessalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, expressed satisfaction at the active participation of all the Heads of States and Government in the discussions on various issues of interest to the continent. “Your valuable comments and contributions have no doubt enriched our debate and informed the decisions that we have adopted on a myriad of issues”, the Prime Minister asserted.

Media Contacts:

Allassane Traore, *Press Attaché, Presidency of Burkina Faso*, Email: allassanetraore26@yahoo.fr
Tel: (+226) 50 49 83 00, Tel. in Addis Ababa: +251 919 811 471

Lawalley Cole, *Coordinator, ADEA Working Group on Communication for Education and Development (WG COMED)*, Email: l.cole@afdb.org
Tel : +(229) 21 32 02 17, Tel. in Addis Ababa: +251 912 790 845

Thanh-Hoa Desruelles, *Principal Communication and External Relations Officer, ADEA*
Email: t.desruelles@afdb.org
Tel.in Tunis: +216/ 98 41 98 87