

SEOUL STATEMENT

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The Tokyo Convention – A new era for mobility and internationalisation of higher education in the Asia-Pacific through qualifications recognition

Affirming the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular, SDG4 to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all,

Inspired by the SDG4 target 4.b that promotes a substantial expansion of scholarships available to developing countries,

Building on the progress linking qualifications recognition with quality assurance and qualifications frameworks to promote international mobility since the Sydney Statement in 2016,

Taking note of the outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Quality Assurance in Higher Education, June 2017 in Shenzhen, China,

The Parties to the Tokyo Convention, the Contracting States to the 1983 Convention and observer countries agree that:

- **The Tokyo Convention that commenced on 1 February 2018** provides renewed opportunities for member states to harmonize their recognition policies and practices for greater cross-border mobility of students among countries in the region and beyond. Regional and country-specific activities should be organized to raise awareness and build capacity so that more member states can ratify and benefit from implementation of the Tokyo Convention on recognition.
- **A strong network of National Information Centres (NICs)** is key to effective implementation of the Tokyo Convention as they promote mutual understanding and transparency of national education systems and qualifications, as well as best-practice principles in recognition. Ready access to authoritative information coupled with fair and transparent practices is necessary for high quality recognition decisions in the Asia-Pacific, enabling mobility.
- **Recognition of qualifications is premised on trust** in the foreign quality assurance system. Regional efforts and initiatives to enhance quality assurance systems in the Asia-Pacific should be prioritised to facilitate greater recognition of qualifications in the region and beyond.

- **Knowledge and skills achieved should be the focus when reaching recognition decisions**, which can be measured using learning outcomes. Qualifications systems that use learning outcomes, such as national qualifications frameworks, can serve as a useful tool and common language when considering substantial difference.
- **Cross-border mobility programmes** can encourage a common understanding of learning outcomes, including in specific subject or discipline areas. Regional collaboration efforts should synergize existing mobility programmes, credit recognition and transfer systems and regional qualifications frameworks so that qualifications and partial studies are better recognized and portable across borders. Going forward, cross-border mobility programmes may be strengthened and extended to promote collaboration in the whole of the Asia-Pacific.
- **Information and Communications Technology** is changing the way higher education is traditionally delivered. It is increasingly being used as an alternative vehicle for education provision, supporting access to higher education. To support fair and transparent recognition of qualifications obtained through non-traditional modes of study, initiatives related to the quality assurance of such modes of study should be explored.
- **To ensure all recognition policies and practices are based on quality assurance and learning outcomes**, policymakers and practitioners in the fields of recognition, quality assurance, qualifications frameworks (or qualifications systems) and student mobility should co-operate and collaborate to create an optimal environment and network for international mobility.
- **In light of the Education 2030 Agenda and current global trends in higher education, the preparation of a Global Convention aims to facilitate and enhance international cooperation in higher education, and further accelerate progress towards fair and transparent recognition of qualifications for all.**

UNESCO, as Secretariat of both Committees and the lead agency of the Education 2030 Agenda, will support efforts to promote greater mobility of students through quality assurance-supported and learning outcome based recognition of qualifications in Asia and the Pacific.