

**REMARKS BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY OF THE INTER-UNIVERSITY  
COUNCIL FOR EAST AFRICA, PROF. ALEXANDRE LYAMBABAJE, AT THE  
SIGNING OF ACE II LEGAL AGREEMENT AT THE WORLD BANK OFFICES,  
NAIROBI, KENYA, ON JULY 11TH, 2016**

- **Coordinating Country Director for Regional Integration for Central, Eastern and Southern Africa (CESA), World Bank**
- **IGAD Executive Secretary**
- **World Bank Country Directors here Present**
- **Members of the Press**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

I wish to start by welcoming you all to this meeting, which forms a milestone in the implementation of an innovative project in which the World Bank is partnering with a number of governments in our region with the aim of improving the quality of training and research in higher education, and reducing the skill gaps in key development priority areas.

IUCEA is the Regional Facilitation Unit (RFU) of the Eastern and Southern Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence (ACE II) project which supports the governments of eight participating countries – Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia – in strengthening the selected African Centers of Excellence (ACEs) to deliver quality post-graduate education and build collaborative research capacity in the regional priority areas. Since its commencement in 2015, the ACE II Project preparation has gone through a number of stages and made impressive progress. As the Regional Facilitation Unit for the project, IUCEA provides overall coordination, facilitation and administration to the project implementation under the guidance and oversight of a Regional Steering Committee (RSC). Each participating Government will constitute a National Steering Committee (NSC) through the ministry

responsible for higher education that will be responsible for providing guidance and oversight to its selected ACEs during the project implementation.

An open, objective, transparent, and merit-based competitive process was employed in the selection of 24 centers of excellence for financing. These are distributed as follows: 4 each in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania, 3 in Kenya, 2 in Malawi and Zambia and 1 in Mozambique. The project will be implemented in accordance with each ACE's Implementation Plan and the signed Performance and Funding Agreement with its Government. The selected ACEs are regional and expected to address specific development challenges facing the region in one of the five priority areas in the region – industry, agriculture, health, education and applied statistics – through graduate training (Master's, PhD, and short-term courses) and applied research in the form of partnerships and collaborations with other institutions and the private sector.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

The ACE II operation will implement three components: (i) strengthening the 24 higher education institutions into regional ACEs in Eastern and Southern Africa in a set of defined regional priority areas (US\$ 140 million); (ii) providing capacity building support to these ACEs through regional activities (US\$3 million); and (iii) supporting coordination and management of the implementation of components (i) and (ii) (US\$5 million).

The ACE II project financing approach is results-based in Component 1 to incentivize the ACE institutions to focus on delivering results. Disbursement will be based on the achievement of the agreed disbursement-linked indicators (DLIs). For Components 2 and 3, the IDA Grant disbursement will employ the traditional method - based on statements of expenditures (SOEs). To measure the progress of the ACEs and the overall project, a Results Framework and a list of disbursement-linked indicators and disbursement-linked results (DLIs/DLRs) have been prepared. Independent verifier(s) will be hired by IUCEA to verify the results achievement of the agreed DLIs/DLRs for all the ACEs in every six months during the project implementation. The project will only disburse funds to an ACE for its achieved results that have been verified by an independent verifier.

Under Component 2, for which IUCEA will be directly responsible, the IDA Grant will finance activities at the regional level to enhance the capacity of the ACEs and help them overcome key challenges for achieving the project development objective. Within this component, areas of support will include: (a) capacity development to address key institutional inadequacies such as partnership development with the private sector; and (b) competitive scholarships to award top future talents and encourage regional student mobility, in which regional students will be financed for two years to attain a Master's degree in any of the ACEs. Finally, Component 3 will be financed in the form of a Regional IDA Grant to the IUCEA to fulfill the responsibility as the RFU. IUCEA has already received an IDA Grant of US\$1 million as part of the Project Preparation Advance (PPA) that will end in September 2016.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

IUCEA is particularly privileged to be a key stakeholder in this project, which demonstrates the willingness of governments in the region to invest in higher education. Over the project duration of five years, collectively these ACEs plan to enroll more than 3,500 graduate students in the regional development priority areas, out of which more than 700 will be PhD students and more than 1,000 will be female students, publish almost 1,500 journal articles, launch more than 300 research collaborations with private sector and other institutions, and generate almost US\$30 million in external revenue. It is expected that at the close of the project in December 2022, these ACEs will have developed sufficient capacity to become sustainable regional hubs for excellent training and research in their specialized fields, capable of leading efforts to address priority development challenges and improve lives in the region.

This projects is very much in line with the mandate of IUCEA, being the EAC institution that promotes partnership and collaboration between Universities located in East Africa and with Universities outside the region; to enhance quality of education and research in higher learning institutions and to facilitate mobility of students and faculty across East African Community. To ensure relevance and quality of higher education programmes, IUCEA in collaboration with development partners and the private sector has developed policies and tools for quality assurance,

students and staff mobility and mutual recognition of qualifications in EAC. Quality assurance units are established in our respective universities and quality assurance experts have been trained; benchmarks for key programmes have been developed while others are under development; annual forums bringing together Academia, Public and Private Sector are organized in collaboration with East Africa Business Council and East Africa Development Bank; and lastly, leaders of Universities are facilitated to network, share their experiences and ideas through regular IUCEA meetings and the annual meeting. All these efforts are made to ensure quality and relevance of higher education in East Africa in order to address the development challenges the region is facing.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen**

To disseminate information on ACEs to stakeholders and vice versa, a communication system has been put in place focusing on internal and external communication as well as dissemination of information to reach a wide audience within and outside the region. A project website [www.ace2.iucea.org](http://www.ace2.iucea.org) has been created as a knowledge sharing tool and it will be the main channel of communication.

Finally, I conclude my remarks by thanking the World Bank for funding such an important initiative for the development of the region and commending participating countries for tackling the real challenges impeding transformation of the region into a knowledge based economy.