

## Association of African Universities

**African Universities' Week Celebration, 2019| November 11 -15, 2019**

**Theme: Towards a Peaceful and Secure Africa Through Quality Higher Education**

### Concept Note

African Universities' Week (AU Week) is a special period on the calendar of the Association of African Universities (AAU) when higher education institutions across Africa commemorate the establishment of AAU. The AAU was formed on 12th November 1967 in Rabat, Morocco by 34 African Universities as the apex organization and forum for consultation, exchange of information and co-operation among institutions of Higher Education in Africa.

Each year, the AU Week's celebration brings together higher education stakeholders across Africa to discuss thematic issues pertinent to the improvement of quality higher education and the relevance of higher education to the development of the African continent in general.

The theme for the 2019 African Universities' Week celebration is **“Towards a Peaceful and Secure Africa through Quality Higher Education”**. It seeks to bring together the entire higher education community and major stakeholders in Africa to map out strategies and methodologies, as well as the place of quality higher education in the promotion of peace and security towards Africa's unity and renaissance in line with the 4<sup>th</sup> Aspiration of Agenda 2063: *A peaceful and secure Africa*.

Peace and security is a major responsibility for all and demands a multi-stakeholder approach in all interventions. Higher Education players and stakeholders are not exempted from this and do have a major role to play in ensuring peace and security on the continent. For the past few decades, there has been a growing concern on the peace and security situation of Africa. This has led to several policy responses such as putting in place structures for mediation and conflict resolution, mechanisms for the management of diversity, strengthening governance and democratic principles, and sensitizing the populace on the need to have respect for the rule of law. All these efforts at the national and continental levels is to fast track the realisation of a peaceful and secure Africa.

War and conflicts of any kind are a threat to global peace and security. Many of the causes of conflicts and wars in Africa have deep roots in history of injustices, corruption, marginalization

and political connotations. The key to uprooting the underlying causes of these conflicts and insecurities is an informed and enlightened citizenry. Quality education comes in critically at this point.

Quality education is an investment that yields profit and as quoted by former Secretary General, Kofi Anan, *“Education, is quite simply, peace-building by another name. Education is the most effective form of defence spending there is. For it yields promise for those who have known only poverty; progress for those who have known only privation; peace for those who have known only pain.”*

Quality Education at all levels is the greatest tool that can be used to impart knowledge, attitudes, and enlighten the mass population and youth in particular. This is well articulated in Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which calls for inclusive and equitable quality education for all. This goal is to ensure that learners acquire the knowledge and skills among other things to appreciate cultural diversity, and promotion of the culture of peace and non-violence.

Education plays a pivotal role to peace building in the sense that when it is delivered in an equitable way, is of good quality, is relevant to the needs of the society, and conflict sensitive, it can help deliver peace and security on the African continent. However, when attention is not paid to how education is delivered, such that it is plagued with exclusion and inequity, and of low quality, it has the potential to incite conflict.

The Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016-2025) takes cognizance of the need for peace to be embedded in education at all levels. The strategy calls for the promotion of peace education, conflict prevention and resolution at all levels of education and for all age groups. A major focus on achieving peace and security using education as a tool is developing policies and plans that are conflict sensitive for education. This approach requires proactiveness from higher education institutions to conduct an audit of our educational system to ensure that the systems are not prone to being drivers of conflict and violence.

Current education policies and educational systems have not been able to adequately deliver on the promise that they hold of enlightening the general citizenry to uphold peace and security in Africa. A higher education system which can be referred to as Quality higher education, must entail awareness of the drivers and threats to peace and security and have adequate systems established to eradicate these threats.

It is against this backdrop that the Association of African Universities which is the apex organization for higher education in Africa chose to dedicate this year's African Universities' week to exploring how quality higher education can be leveraged on to deliver peace and security on the continent. The week will be dedicated to addressing cross-cutting issues such as:

- The quality and relevance of higher education towards peace building
- The intentional role higher education institutions should play towards peace building
- The need to strengthen African higher education and research institutions to come out with policies and recommendations that addresses current peace and security concerns on the continent
- How higher education can engage all key stakeholders – including government in the peace building efforts
- How higher education can adopt multidisciplinary approaches to dealing with peace education.

### **Objectives of the week celebration**

- Promote peace and security through quality higher education
- Promote multidisciplinary approaches to dealing with peace and security in Africa
- Accelerate the development of systems, programmes, and policies to deal with threats to national and continental peace and security

### **Format of celebrations**

AAU member universities and African universities in general can implement big or small events to celebrate the African Universities Week in line with the 2019 theme - depending on their inclinations, resources and available time. To help with some inspiration, here are a selection of ideas from past African Universities Week Celebrations:

1. Workshops
2. Talks - One of the most popular event types for African Universities Week is the talks, but there are several different formats to consider:
  - Formal lectures to a specialist audience
  - Talks to a general audience
  - Cabarets, where speakers talk for 10 to 15 minutes
  - Lightning talks, which usually last 5 minutes

3. Panel discussions - Panel discussions are a very popular format, not because they put less load on the speakers. Some panel discussions ask that each speaker talk for five or ten minutes before the debate begins, others just plunge right in. For a good conversation, the number of panellists should be kept low, no more than four plus a moderator, and keep any introductory statements very short.
4. Debates
5. Meet-ups, mixers, networking events - Some mixers start off with a short talk, but most of the time is set aside for higher education stakeholders to meet and mingle with others who have similar interests.
6. Museum or gallery tours, exhibitions, displays - If you're the curator of a museum, gallery or collection, you could consider a special tour that focuses on Peace. Or perhaps create a special exhibition of artefacts, letters and/or art related to this year's theme for the African Universities' Week Celebrations.