



**REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA**

**REPORT**

**OF THE**

**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY  
ON THE**

**RATIFICATION OF THE GLOBAL CONVENTION ON THE RECOGNITION  
OF QUALIFICATIONS CONCERNING HIGHER EDUCATION**

**FOR THE**

**FOURTH SESSION OF THE THIRTEENTH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

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## FOREWORD

Honourable Madam Speaker, the Committee on Education, Science and Technology has the honour to present its Report on the consideration of the Ratification of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education for the Fourth Session of the Thirteenth National Assembly. The functions of the Committee are set out under Standing Orders 206 (c) of the National Assembly of Zambia Standing Orders, 2024. Additionally, Standing Order 207 (f) provides that a Portfolio Committee shall consider international agreements, conventions and treaties in accordance with Article 63(2)(e) of the Constitution.

In order to acquaint itself with the ramifications of the Global Convention Articles of Association, the Committee sought both written and oral submissions from various stakeholders. The Committee held seven sittings to consider the submissions. The list of stakeholders is at Appendix II of the Report.

The Report is organised in three parts. Part I provides the background and summary of the provisions of the Convention, Part II presents the summary of submissions from stakeholders, while Part III constitutes the Committee's observations and recommendations.

The Committee is grateful to the stakeholders who tendered in both written and oral submissions. It further wishes to thank you, Madam Speaker, for affording it the opportunity to scrutinise the Convention. The Committee's appreciation is further extended to the Office of the Clerk of the National Assembly for the support and guidance rendered throughout its deliberations.



Mr Harry S K Kamboni, MP  
**CHAIRPERSON**

July, 2025  
**LUSAKA**

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## Acronyms

ECZ	Examinations Council of Zambia
HAQAA	Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation
HEA	Higher Education Authority
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
SADC	Southern African Development Community
TEVETA	Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
ZAQA	Zambia Qualifications Authority
ZECF	Zambia Education Curriculum Framework
ZIALE	Zambia Institute of Advanced Legal Education
ZQF	Zambia Qualification Framework

## **1.0 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee composed Mr Harry S K Kamboni, MP (Chairperson); Ms Melesiana Phiri, MP (Vice-Chairperson); Mr Twaambo Mutinta, MP; Mr Mweemba Malambo, MP; Mr Chinga Miyutu, MP; Mr Tyson Simuzingili, MP; Mr George Chisanga, MP; Mr Sydney Mushanga, MP; Mr Allen Banda, MP; and Mr Elias Daka, MP.

## **PART I**

### **2.0 BACKGROUND OF THE GLOBAL CONVENTION**

The Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education was adopted on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019 during United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organisation's (UNESCO's) 40<sup>th</sup> General Conference. It was the first United Nations Treaty on higher education with a global scope, building on five decades of regional recognition conventions.

The Convention addressed the need for a universal framework that facilitated the fair recognition of qualifications, degrees and credentials across borders. It reflected growing global trends in student and academic mobility, and the increasing diversity of educational systems and delivery modes.

The Convention which was adopted under the auspices of UNESCO was the first United Nations treaty to provide a universal framework for fair, transparent and non-discriminatory recognition of higher education qualifications.

### **3.0 OBJECTIVE OF THE GLOBAL CONVENTION**

The overall objective of the Agreement was to facilitate academic and professional mobility, enhance international cooperation and promote access to quality higher education across borders.

The specific objectives of the convention were to:

- i. promote and strengthen international cooperation in higher education;
- ii. support interregional initiatives, policies and innovations for international cooperation in higher education;
- iii. facilitate global mobility and the achievement of merit in higher education for the mutual benefit of qualification holders, higher-education institutions, employers and any other stakeholders or the States Parties to this Convention, while understanding and respecting the diversity of the States Parties' higher-education systems;
- iv. provide an inclusive global framework for the fair, transparent, consistent, coherent, timely and reliable recognition of qualifications concerning higher education;
- v. respect, uphold and protect the autonomy and diversity of higher-education institutions and systems;
- vi. foster trust and confidence in the quality and reliability of qualifications through, inter alia, the promotion of integrity and ethical practices;

- vii. promote a culture of quality assurance in higher-education institutions and systems and develop the capacities necessary for ensuring reliability, consistency and complementarity in quality assurance, in qualifications frameworks and in the recognition of qualifications in order to support international mobility;
- viii. promote the development, collection and sharing of accessible, up-to-date, reliable, transparent and relevant information and the dissemination of best practices among stakeholders, States Parties and regions;
- ix. promote, through the recognition of qualifications, inclusive and equitable access to quality higher education and support lifelong learning opportunities for all, including refugees and displaced persons; and
- x. foster globally the optimal use of human and educational resources with a view to promoting education for sustainable development, and contribute to structural, economic, technological, cultural, democratic and social development for all societies.

#### **4.0 SALIENT PROVISIONS OF THE GLOBAL CONVENTION ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION**

The salient provisions of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education Articles of Association were as set out hereunder.

##### **Article 1 – Definitions**

This Article provided for the definition of various terms contained in the Global Convention. It also enlisted words whose interpretation governed the administration of the Convention.

##### **Article II – Objectives of the Convention**

This article elaborated the objectives that the Convention aimed to achieve.

##### **Article IV- Recognition of Qualifications Giving Access to Higher Education**

This Article provided that each party shall recognise, for the purposes of access to its higher-education system, the qualifications and documented or certified prior learning acquired in other States Parties. It provided that this would only be applicable if no substantial differences might be shown between the general requirements for access in the State Party in which the qualification was obtained.

##### **Articles VII – Recognition of Partial Studies and Qualifications held by Refugees and Displaced Persons.**

The Article VII provided for all States Parties to take necessary and feasible steps, within their education system and in conformity with their laws to develop reasonable procedures for assessing fairly and efficiently whether refugees and displaced persons fulfilled the relevant requirements of the following:

- i. access to higher education;
- ii. further higher-education programmes; and
- iii. the seeking of employment opportunities.

##### **Article IX- Assessment of an Application**

This article mandated an applicant to provide adequate information in good faith.

### **Article XVIII- Entry into Force**

The Article provided that the Convention shall enter into force three months after the date of deposit of the twentieth instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval, or accession. However, this was only applicable to those States Parties which had deposited their respective instruments of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession on or before the stated date.

### **Article XXIII - Amendments**

This Article provided that any Party that wished to move a motion for amendment, may write to the Director-General of UNESCO, listing the proposed amendments to the Convention. It also provided that for an amendment to be adopted, two third majority of States Parties present and voting must support it. It further provided that once adopted, the amendments to this Convention shall be submitted to the States Parties for ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

## **PART II**

### **5.0 SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDERS' SUBMISSIONS**

Stakeholders submitted that should the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education be ratified, Zambia would consequentially be required to undertake the following:

- a. recognise for the purpose of entry into educational programmes, qualifications or certified prior learning acquired from member states. It was submitted that while there had generally been a practice of accepting qualifications from other countries for entry into education and training programmes in Zambia, there had also been some limitations. For example, entry into the Zambia Institute of Advanced Legal Education (ZIALE) training programme (for Legal Practitioners Qualifying certification) was restricted to those with law degree qualifications from Commonwealth countries. Once this convention was ratified, ZIALE may be obligated to accept qualifications from Non-Commonwealth countries, as long as they were party to the convention and there were no substantial differences in the qualifications;
- b. grant individuals with recognised qualifications from member states such rights as the right to have their qualification assessed for further education, the right to seek employment and the right to use the title that went with the qualification; and
- c. develop procedures or mechanisms for assessing qualifications held by refugees and displaced persons to determine if they fulfilled requirements needed to access further education or indeed seek employment; and
- d. realign and strengthen the operations of the Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) and review some of its policy and regulatory frameworks in order to meet the provisions of the convention.

With regard to beneficial ramifications, stakeholders submitted as set out below.

### **i. Global Recognition of Zambian Qualifications**

Some stakeholders submitted that the Convention provided an opportunity to promote global recognition of qualifications from Zambian universities and colleges. As a party to the Convention, other member states would be obligated to recognise Zambian qualifications, as long as they were not substantially different from those of the receiving countries. This would consequently cure the problem of Zambian degree qualifications that had been 'downgraded' in some jurisdictions.

### **ii. Mobility of Labour and Students**

Other stakeholders submitted that ratifying the convention was also intended to foster global mobility of labour and students. In this vein, it opened up opportunities for Zambian students to study abroad without being subjected to bridging courses or repetition of academic programmes on the basis of non-recognition. It also enhanced opportunities for graduates of Zambian universities and colleges for employment in international organisations and other member states as their qualifications would be comparable to qualifications at the same level in those countries.

### **iii. Internationalisation of Zambia's Higher Education System**

Stakeholders submitted that with enhanced global recognition of qualifications obtained from Zambia's higher education institutions, there were prospects that the country may attract more foreign students to study in Zambia. The country was becoming more attractive to foreign students who brought in forex and thus contributed, not only to the growth of Zambia's universities, but also the economy.

They submitted that besides foreign students, the Convention sought to promote international cooperation in higher education, which would be beneficial to Zambian higher education institutions, and they may leverage such opportunities to strengthen research capacity and development of international academic programmes. This may further be strengthened by the recognition of joint degrees and cross-border education which was being promulgated by the Convention.

### **iv. Increased Access to Formal Qualifications and Enhancement of Skills Development**

Some stakeholders submitted that at national level, apart from recognition of traditional qualifications such as degrees, diplomas and certificates, the Convention also promoted recognition of other types of awards such as micro-credentials and credit obtained through recognition of prior learning from both formal and non-formal learning. This had potential to promote diverse pathways for skills development, as well as promote recognition of citizen's knowledge and skills obtained through work-place based training and other non-formal and informal settings. This spur would increase access to formal qualifications and open up employment opportunities for individuals trained through micro-credentials and non-formal settings.

### **v. Quality Assurance**

Stakeholders submitted that to ensure that qualifications recognised among member states were of acceptable international standards, the convention promoted the development of robust internal and external quality assurance systems among member states. Zambia would substantially benefit from international cooperation in the development of quality assurance systems. The major international developments that sought to promote this objective of the Convention included the development of the

continental qualifications framework and the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA) initiative aimed at harmonising systems for quality assurance and accredited in Africa.

However, various stakeholders submitted that a number of challenges may arise in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention, once adopted. Among them included the following listed hereunder.

**a. Cost Implication of Strengthening Regulatory Agencies**

For effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention, once ratified, there would be need to strengthen the operations of regulatory agencies such as the Zambia Qualifications Authority, Higher Education Authority and the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Authority. There would be need to strengthen their financial and human resource capacity, as they would play a vital role in ensuring that qualifications that come into the country for recognition were not sub-standard. Thus, the qualifications verification and validation system would need to be strengthening. Similarly, regulatory agencies would have to strengthen their external quality assurance systems to ensure that Zambia's qualifications were of acceptable international standard for recognition among parties to the convention.

**b. Technical Capacity Required to set up Internal Quality Assurance Systems**

Effective implementation of the provisions of the convention required that Zambian universities and colleges had strong internal quality assurance systems to meet international standards of training. While this may be seemingly easy for mature and experienced universities such as the University of Zambia and the Copperbelt University, there were still problems of capacity in most universities and colleges. The Country had more than sixty universities and over 200 colleges which were at varying levels of development and capacity. Thus, substantial effort was required to build internal quality assurance systems of these institutions to foster international recognition of qualifications emanating from them.

**c. Complexities of Harmonisation and Recognition of Qualifications from different Geographical or Educational Orientations**

The complexities of harmonising qualifications across geographical and cultural settings had been one of the most important reasons why African countries had been slow to ratify this convention. For example, while Zambia may find it easy to harmonise its education system with Commonwealth countries or the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, it was still a challenge to do so with systems outside these groupings. This perhaps, would continue to be one of the implementation challenges of this Convention and would require persistent international dialogue and cooperation to address.

## **PART III**

### **7.0 COMMITTEE'S OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee supports the proposal to ratify the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education. In doing so, it makes the observations and recommendations set out below.

### **i. Alignment of Laws and Policy**

The Committee observes that with the approval of the 2023 Zambia Education Curriculum Framework (ZECF) by Cabinet, Zambia is already on its way to aligning with the global standards on education.

However, the Committee urges the Executive to review the existing laws such as the *Higher Education Act, No. 4 of 2013* and the *Zambia Qualifications Act, No.8 of 2024*; and frameworks such as the Zambia Qualification Framework (ZQF), with a view to establishing transparent, fair and non-discriminatory mechanisms for the recognition of qualifications. The review should include the performance descriptors and the duration of training required for each qualification, in order to align them to global standards and with the Convention's principles.

### **ii. Harmonisation of Mandates for Institutions in the Education Sector**

The Committee observes with concern the overlapping mandate of ZAQA, with those of other authorities such as the Higher Education Authority (HEA); the Technical Education, Vocational and Entrepreneurship Training Authority (TEVETA), and the Examinations Council of Zambia (ECZ).

The Committee is of the strong view that overlapping responsibilities and fragmented systems can lead to rigorous procedures for qualification accreditation, evaluation and recognition, causing delays and confusion for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), students, graduates and employers.

The Committee, therefore, urges the Executive to review the mandates of the regulatory institutions in the education sector, and institute the alignment process as this will create a more efficient, transparent and user-friendly system that supported the goals of the Global Convention. The harmonisation was also expected to foster greater trust in the education system, improve coordination among agencies and enhance the country's ability to implement international standards effectively.

### **iii. Investment in Capacity and Infrastructure**

The Committee observes that in order to meet the requirements of the Convention, there is need to upgrade both physical and Information Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure for higher education, to ensure that institutions have capacity to deliver the quality education that aligns with global standards.

Additionally, higher education institutions must implement targeted capacity-building initiatives to equip their personnel at all levels with the essential competencies, skills and knowledge. The Committee, therefore, urges the executive to mobilise requisite funding to develop ICT infrastructure and conduct targeted capacity-enhancement activities, without delay.

### **iv. Cost Implication of Strengthening Regulatory Agencies**

The Committee observes that for effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention, there would be need to strengthen the operations of regulatory agencies such as the ZAQA, HEA and TEVETA.

The Committee, therefore, recommends that the Executive puts measures in place that will strengthen the financial and human resource capacity of the said regulators, as doing so will play a vital role in ensuring that qualifications that come into the country for recognition are not sub-standard. Thus, the qualifications verification and validation system will need strengthening. The regulatory agencies should also have their external quality assurance systems strengthened to ensure that Zambia's qualifications are of acceptable international standard for recognition among parties to the Convention.

#### **v. Access to Higher Education by Refugees**

The Committee observes that the Convention underscores the need for Member States to put in place reasonable procedures for assessing fairly and efficiently whether refugees and displaced persons fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education and employment opportunities.

In this regard, the Committee recommends that the Executive puts in place corresponding legal and policy framework for recognition of prior learning for refugees and displaced persons, in conformity with the provisions of the Convention.

### **8.0 CONCLUSION**

Zambia should ratify the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education to strengthen its position within the international academic community, and to enhance opportunities for its citizens. Ratification would ensure fair, transparent and non-discriminatory recognition of qualifications, promoting academic and professional mobility both into and out of the country. It would also drive improvements in the quality and credibility of Zambia's higher education system, support inclusive access to learning and employment, and safeguard against fraudulent academic practices. By aligning with global standards, Zambia would affirm its commitment to educational excellence, international cooperation, and national development through a more skilled, competitive and globally recognised workforce.

The Committee is, therefore, in support of the ratification of the Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education.



Mr Harry S K Kamboni, MP  
**CHAIRPERSON**

July, 2025  
**LUSAKA**

## **APPENDIX I – NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OFFICIALS**

Mr Barnabas Bwalya, Director – Social Committees

Mrs Chitalu K Mumba, Deputy Director – Social Committees

Mr Darius Kunda, Senior Committee Clerk - Social Committees 2

Mr Moses Chuba, Committee Clerk

Ms Anita Mulale, Administrative Assistant

Mr Mitchwell Fwanayanga, Intern

Ms Taona Chabinga, Committee Assistant

## **APPENDIX II-LIST OF WITNESSES**

Examinations Council of Zambia  
Higher Education Authority  
Ministry of Education  
Policy Monitoring and Research Centre  
UNICAF University  
University of Zambia  
Zambia Qualifications Authority