The African Qualifications Verification Network (AQVN) had its annual meeting from 30 – 31 October 2017 at SAQA House in Pretoria, South Africa, where the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) is based. The nine countries represented at the meeting were Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition, the International Labour Organization (ILO) attended. Apologies were recorded from Gambia, Mauritius and Senegal.

The objectives of the meeting were to:
1. Take forward the development of the AQVN Constitution;
2. Finalise membership categories;
3. Plan for implementation of 2018 activities; and
4. Plan for scaling up of AQVN membership and activities.

Mr. Joe Samuels, the CEO of SAQA, and Chairperson of the Technical Committee on Certification and Accreditation (TCCA), opened the meeting. He briefed delegates on the genesis of the AQVN and outlined its aims of improving efficiency when conducting qualifications verification. He added that the AQVN will ensure that the processes for determining the genuineness of qualifications are effective. In his concluding remarks, Mr. Samuels emphasised that the verification of qualifications requires members to link up with similar networks in other parts of the world and urged delegates to implement the outcomes of the deliberations of the meeting.

The Chairperson of the AQVN Interim Council, Ms Miriam M.A. Chiyaba, then shared achievements of the Network thus far. The achievements included: sharing the lists of accredited institutions amongst
member countries; drafting a constitution; developing a concept paper on the benefits of being an AQVN member; and extending an invitation to more countries across the continent to join the network.

The AQVN Constitution was approved after incorporating inputs from the participants. The meeting agreed that each member country pay an annual subscription fee of US$350 to the AQVN with effect from April 2018. It was also agreed that the AQVN Constitution be translated into French and Portuguese.

The office bearers of the AQVN Council were elected as follows:

• Chairperson – Ms. Miriam M. A. Chiyaba (Zambia Qualifications Authority);
• Deputy Chairperson – Ms. Gillian K. Mmolotsa (Botswana Qualifications Authority);
• Treasurer – Ms. ’Makotelo T. Motseko (Lesotho Council on Higher Education);
• Secretary – Mr. Navin Vasudev (South African Qualifications Authority); and
• Communications and Marketing Officer – Ms. Gabisile Hlatshwayo (Swaziland Higher Education Council).

Network members representing their respective countries shared challenges they experience when conducting verifications and explored possible solutions. Digitisation and verification of qualifications was discussed as well as the potential for the AQVN to collaborate with other regional and global bodies such as Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), African Union (AU), Groningen Declaration Network (GDN), International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The ILO shared collaboration opportunities available for bodies such as the AQVN.

An action plan up to October 2018 was approved and various strategies for expanding the Network were agreed upon.

The next meeting of the AQVN will be held on 29 – 30 October 2018 in Ghana.