

The 67th Annual Meeting of The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) has ended in Freetown, Sierra Leone with the election of the country's Chief Government Nominee on Council, Dr. Alhaji Mohamed Kamara, as Vice-Chairman for a one-year tenure. He succeeds Mr. Ebrima Sisawo of The Gambia.

The meeting, which was held from March 18 to 22, 2019, was formally opened by His Excellency Rtd. Brigadier Julius Maada Bio, President and Commander-In-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Sierra Leone, who was represented by the Honourable Chief Minister, Professor David John Francis.

In his keynote address, President Bio welcomed delegates to Freetown. He described WAEC as a veritable sub-regional body administering credible examinations and unifying the member countries. He lauded the Council for constantly demonstrating its commitment to academic excellence, regional cooperation and global best practices. He stated that his government had prioritised investment in human capital development by introducing Free Quality School Education aimed at providing access for all eligible pupils and students in Sierra Leone. He called on WAEC to continue to uphold standards and integrity in its assessment process, adding that there should always be relevance between assessment and curriculum so that the outcomes of assessment would accurately reflect the individual's competence or attainment in relation to tasks or further studies. He also stressed the need for synergy among the various country offices of WAEC, and urged the Council to constantly deploy cutting-edge technology in its operations across the sub-region. While reaffirming his government's commitment to the fulfilment of all obligations to WAEC, the President advised the Council to do everything necessary to sustain its reputation as a leading examining board in Africa.

The week-long meeting was attended by delegates from the member countries of WAEC - The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Among the delegates were the nominees of governments, representatives of ministries/departments of education, universities, teachers' associations, and other interest groups. The meeting was preceded by the 24th WAEC Endowment Fund Lecture entitled "Innovative Approaches to Measuring Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes of Students", which was delivered by Professor Joe A. D. Alie - Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies, University of Sierra Leone. Council, which is the highest organ of WAEC, holds its meeting annually in rotation among the five member countries. The meeting was hosted in 2018 by the Government of The Gambia and it will be the turn of the Government of Liberia in 2020. At the 67th Meeting, Council reviewed the activities and operations of the organisation in the five member countries in the past year. It considered reports from its national and international committees on various aspects of the organisation's operations, and ratified the decisions taken on its behalf by the committees.

It also deliberated on the action plans presented by the committees and national offices, and firmed up strategies for hitch-free operations in the current year. Furthermore, Council received reports from the leaders of the country delegations, and lauded the various people-oriented programmes and initiatives being implemented in the education sector of their respective countries. It expressed appreciation to the governments of the member countries for their renewed commitment to educational matters and the conduct of credible public examinations. On the areas that appeared to be lagging, it called on the governments to step up their interventions for further assurances of access to quality education, improved academic attainments and enhanced human capital development. It also expressed profound appreciation for everything that each member country had done to keep WAEC in existence and provide the enabling environment for the Council to deliver quality service for sixty-seven years.

Council commended the Management and staff of its country offices and Headquarters for the successful conduct of examinations, early release of results and prompt issuance of certificates. It expressed worry over the depth and dimensions of irregularities in public examinations, and called on governments, law enforcement agencies and ICT companies/experts in the sub-region to collaborate with examining boards and other educational institutions in fashioning more sustainable interventions that could rid the school system of assessment frauds.

At the opening ceremony, three candidates were honoured with the WAEC International Excellence Awards for their outstanding performance in WASSCE for School Candidates, 2018. They were Master Peter Seunara Arotiba (1st Prize), Miss Wilhermina Opoku (2nd Prize) and Miss Brago Sarpong Afrifa (3rd Prize). The three winners emerged from a total of 1,976,537 candidates who sat WASSCE for School Candidates, 2018 in The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The Augustus Bandele Oyediran Best Candidate in West Africa Award was also presented to Master Peter Seunara Arotiba. Council appealed to international donor agencies, corporate organisations and philanthropic private individuals to collaborate with WAEC by instituting other awards to encourage more students in the subregion to strive for academic excellence.

