

The 66th Annual Meeting of The West African Examinations Council (WAEC) has ended in Banjul, The Gambia with the election of Mr. Baboucarr Bouy of The Gambia as the 19th Chairman of the sub-regional organisation. His election is for a three-year tenure in line with the Council's Convention. He succeeds Dr. D. Evelyn S. Kandakai of Liberia, who was elected in March 2015.



The 66th Meeting, which was held from Monday, 19th to Friday, 23rd March 2018, was declared open by His Excellency Adama Barrow, President of the Republic of The Gambia, who was represented on the occasion by the Vice President, Her Excellency Hajia Fatoumata Tambajang.

In his keynote address, President Adama Barrow welcomed the delegates to The Gambia, the Smiling Coast of Africa. He described WAEC as a unique institution within the West African sub-region and the comity of assessment boards which had consistently played prominent roles in educational reforms and development in the member countries. He expressed delight that the Council was set to conduct the maiden edition of the Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examination (GABECE) for Private Candidates in December 2018. That examination would offer a number of students the opportunity to further their education beyond Grade 9. The

President disclosed that his government had taken over the payment of examination fees at both Basic and Secondary Education levels in The Gambia so as to expand access for all.

He gave the assurance that the fees would be remitted promptly to WAEC to guarantee quality service delivery. He also assured the stakeholders that his government would fulfil its financial commitments to the Council despite the prevailing economic situation. He decried the spate of malpractice in public examinations, adding that his government was collaborating with the Council to implement a number of measures against the evil. He then urged other member governments to maintain zero tolerance for examination fraud by relentlessly waging a war against the menace.

Council, which is the governing board of WAEC, holds its yearly meeting in rotation among the five member countries - The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The meeting was held in 2017 in Nigeria and it will be the turn of Serra Leone to host in 2019 and Liberia in 2020.

Delegates from the five member countries who attended the five-day meeting were made up of government nominees as well as representatives of the ministries of education, universities, secondary schools and other interest groups. The meeting also featured the 23rd Annual WAEC Endowment Fund Lecture entitled Development Partners/Government Partnership in Education Sector Financing: Perspectives on Respective Roles, Opportunities and Responsibilities in the Identification of Needed Improvement Interventions, the Eventual Design of Related Projects and the Provision of the Conditions for Effective Implementation. The lecture was delivered by Dr. Baboucarr S. Sarr, retired Education Official and International Civil Servant, of The Gambia.

During the deliberations, Council received reports on the activities of the five country offices in the preceding year, and ratified the decisions taken on its behalf by the various committees. It also considered the action plans presented by the country offices and committees for hitch-free operations in the current year.

Council received from the leaders of the country delegations detailed reports on the efforts being made to improve education service delivery in their respective countries. It commended the member governments for implementing various projects, programmes and initiatives within available resources to deliver quality education to their citizens. It appreciated the goodwill, cooperation and assistance which WAEC continues to enjoy in the sub-region, and expressed gratitude to the students, teachers, schools, officials of the ministries of education, parents, the security agencies and all other stakeholders who constantly contribute to the success of WAEC's operations and activities.

Council expressed concern over the perverted deployment of modern technology in educational

activities, especially the use of websites, email, cellphones and other electronic devices to perpetrate examination malpractice. It called on governments and other relevant stakeholders (law enforcement agencies, GSM service providers and communications regulatory authorities) to rescue the school system by urgently arresting the worsening trend. It commended the various national offices for doing everything necessary to safeguard the integrity of the Council's examinations and the sanctity of its certificates.

At the opening ceremony, three candidates were honoured with the WAEC International Excellence Award in recognition of their outstanding performance in WASSCE for School Candidates, 2017. They were Miss Jochebed Adwoa Sutherland (1st Prize), Miss Audrey Emefa Awuttey (2nd Prize) and Miss Rachel Amaning Kwarteng (3rd Prize). The three candidates, all Ghanaians, were selected from a total of 1,909,088 candidates who sat the examination in the five member countries. The Augustus Bandele Oyediran Award for the Best Candidate in West Africa was also presented to Miss Jochebed Adwoa Sutherland.

On the same august occasion, the prestigious award of Distinguished Friend of Council was conferred on an eminent citizen of The Gambia, Alhaji Kebba L. Jagne, for his outstanding contribution to the success of the work of WAEC.

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