Preamble

Young people today are the most connected and the most open-minded generation that the world has ever seen.\(^1\) This is particularly evident in Asia and the Pacific, which is a global leader in internationally mobile students. Students pursue valuable international opportunities to enhance their knowledge, skills and competencies and promote global citizenship. The comparability, recognition and quality assurance of higher education qualifications has become a growing area of concern, particularly in countries where administrative systems are underdeveloped.\(^2\)

These trends highlight the complex pursuit of quality education in the context of sustainable development. Recognizing the need for action at all levels, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2015. Sustainable Development Goal four (SDG4), known as Education 2030, aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.

To advance the Education 2030 Framework for Action, delegates and guests from over 30 UNESCO Member States in Asia-Pacific gathered in Sydney, Australia on 17-18 August 2016 for the 14th Session of the Regional Committee on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific held in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on Education 2030 to promote the importance of international recognition of qualifications in facilitating mobility and employability.

Context

The Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (2011 Tokyo Convention) and the Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific (1983 Bangkok Convention) provide a unique means for countries in the region to cooperate in facilitating mobility through the international recognition of higher education qualifications based on principles of fairness and transparency. They also build national-level capacity throughout Asia and the Pacific with respect for the great diversity of education systems of Member States, including the richness of cultural, social, political, philosophical, religious and economic backgrounds.

\(^1\) Message from Ms Irina Bokova, Director-General of UNESCO, International Youth Day, 12 August 2016
Before it can come into force, the 2011 Tokyo Convention requires five Members States from Asia and the Pacific to be a Party to the Convention. At the time of issuing this statement, three Member States – Australia, China, and New Zealand – have ratified the 2011 Tokyo Convention.

The forthcoming *Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications* will be a tool to ensure that higher education qualifications are recognized as widely as possible. It will support inter-regional collaboration and facilitate access for students of the Asia-Pacific to mobility opportunities around the world, building on the strong foundation of the 2011 Tokyo Convention and 1983 Bangkok Convention.

The Education 2030 Framework for Action also promotes mobility and employability by emphasizing lifelong learning, equal access and validation of knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education. It highlights that mobility is also achieved through scholarships, which support international opportunities for young people who may not otherwise have access to quality higher education.

Many quality tools have been developed within the Asia-Pacific region to enhance mobility and employability. Improving links and coherence between international recognition, quality assurance and qualifications frameworks will support the achievement of SDG4.

**Actions**

International cooperation is at the heart of the recognition of qualifications and facilitating mobility. Effective quality assurance is important for building mutual trust and underpins confidence in qualifications.

Acknowledging the interconnected nature of these challenges, participants of the 14th Session and Regional Workshop on Education 2030 will strive to advance the goals and targets in the Education 2030 Framework for Action and serve as champions of the 2011 Tokyo Convention by encouraging Member States to:

- ratify and implement the 2011 Tokyo Convention to demonstrate commitment to improved mobility and employability within Asia and the Pacific and to strengthen collaboration for the benefit of people in the region;
- support the forthcoming Global Convention to strengthen inter-regional cooperation for the continuous improvement of mobility, access, equity and quality;
- support less developed countries and small island developing states in Asia and the Pacific through expanding scholarship programmes, to contribute to the internationalization of higher education and research.

UNESCO, as the specialized United Nations agency for education, will continue in its mandated role to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 agenda and promote coherence between international recognition, quality assurance and qualifications frameworks for quality higher education and lifelong learning opportunities for all.