

**Annual Conference of the West and Central African
Research and Education Network (WACREN)**

30-31 March 2017, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

**ABIDJAN DECLARATION ON RESEARCH AND EDUCATION NETWORKS
IN THE WACREN REGION**

We, the participants of the Annual Conference of the West and Central African Research and Education Network, meeting in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire on 30 - 31 March 2017, after assessment of the state of development of our nascent National Research and Education Networks (NRENs), have identified important challenges related to interconnection infrastructure and financing.

We note that:

Despite the proven potential of Research and Education Networks (RENs) in achieving several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the late start of their deployment in West and Central Africa remains a source of concern for their effective contribution in addressing these global challenges.

Furthermore,

At national level, most higher education and research institutions in West and Central Africa are experiencing real difficulties interconnecting to form operational NRENs. This delay in the effective implementation of NRENs continues to have negative impacts on education, learning and research, as well as on the competitiveness of African institutions in the scientific field.

As a result, we strongly recommend as members of the NRENs in West and Central Africa grouped in WACREN:

1. To our institutions and the entire higher education and research community: an exceptional mobilization of human, material and financial resources for participation in the effective establishment of National Research and Education Networks.
2. To the National Telecommunications Regulatory Authorities: a strong support for NRENs, especially through facilitation of interconnections at national and regional level.
3. To the ministries in charge of higher education and research:
 - i) the strengthening of their advocacy at national and regional level for NRENs, highlighting their central role in the production, dissemination and valorisation of knowledge, in scientific collaborations, and their effective contribution to national and regional policies for cultural, economic and social development;
 - ii) the urgent mobilization of the necessary resources for the participation of the NRENs in the AfricaConnect2 project co-funded by the European Union, in order to not miss this opportunity to transform drastically and in an unprecedented way the digital environment of the education and research sector in West and Central Africa.
4. To regional and international partners: the strengthening of their active solidarity and support, essential for the harmonious development of WACREN and its members.

Done in Abidjan on 31 March 2017