



**“RETHINKING ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN EAST AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES”
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA, 21ST-23RD OCTOBER 2008**



SUMMARY REPORT

The Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR) and the Scholars at Risk Network (SAR) co-sponsored a conference and workshop on academic freedom in Ethiopia, on October 21-23, 2008. The event was held at the Ghion Hotel in Addis Ababa in partnership with the Forum for Social Studies (FSS), the Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa (OSSREA) and the British Council. The workshop was supported by a grant from Foundation Open Society Institute (Zug). Faculty members and researchers from thirteen countries participated in the event, including representatives from Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Ukraine, United Kingdom and the United States. The highlights of the two day event include:

Conference

- Discussion of international and regional standards and instruments relating to academic freedom
- Case studies and personal experiences, including reports from Ethiopia, Ghana, Jordan, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, Somalia, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Ukraine

Workshop

- Further development of a common framework for analysing academic freedom-related concerns, with particular emphasis on social responsibility
- Further elaboration of possible advocacy/response strategies

Plan for Follow-up Activities

- Agreement on further outreach to African universities and scholars
- Interest in additional and more advanced workshops, including possible follow-up event to be held in West Africa



- An African network on academic freedom was established to coordinate follow-up activities in cooperation with NEAR, SAR and other partners



TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21

SYMPOSIUM ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM IN EAST AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

Events opened with introductions by participating co-sponsors. **Bahru Zewde**, Executive Director of the [Forum for Social Studies](#) (FSS) in Ethiopia began by welcoming participants and thanking the co-hosts. Dr. Zewde described FSS' history of engagement in policy-oriented research on the development challenges facing Ethiopia. He then provided a brief outline of the important developments in higher education in Ethiopia over the past several decades including, in particular recent challenges such as the problem of reconciling quality and quantity in education and its impact on academic freedom and institutional autonomy. He thanked NEAR and SAR and wished the group fruitful deliberations.

John Akker, Executive Director of the [Network for Education and Academic Rights](#) (NEAR) thanked the co-hosts and provided a brief outline of NEAR's work, which aims to facilitate international collaboration between organisations active in issues of academic freedom and educational rights. Mr. Akker stated that from NEAR's point of view the objectives of the event were two-fold: 1) to gain a better understanding of the current challenges facing East African universities and scholars, 2) to learn how/what improvements might be made.

Paschal Mihyo, Executive Director at the [Organisation for Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa](#) (OSSREA) described the work that OSSREA has undertaken to promote dialogue and interaction between researchers and policy-makers in Eastern and Southern Africa. OSSREA has National Chapters and Liaison Offices in 21 member countries in the region. Its



members are social scientists and institutions engaged in teaching and/or research in the social sciences in Eastern and Southern Africa. Dr. Mihyo expressed his particular interest in learning how the African experience with academic freedom and university autonomy issues compared with experiences in other regions. He was delighted to see that the third day of the event was entirely devoted to discussing next steps and developing a plan of action.

Robert Quinn, Executive Director at the [Scholars at Risk Network](#) (SAR) thanked co-hosts and participants, in particular those who had travelled long distances to come to the event—from Ghana, Senegal, Jordan and Ukraine. He reported that colleagues from CODESRIA sent their regrets that they were not able to participate at this time. Mr. Quinn acknowledged the important work CODESRIA has done to promote academic freedom issues in Africa, and the region and indicated SAR and NEAR's



desire to work together with them on any follow-up activities. Mr. Quinn then described SAR's three main activity-tracks: providing direct assistance to individual threatened academics; building capacity and developing tools for promoting academic freedom and related higher education values; educating the public about the important role that scholars and academic freedom play in society.

Session 1: Overview of Academic Freedom Issues and Relevant Instruments

Bahru Zewde chaired the first session and began by introducing the three speakers.

Patience Awopegba, Education Specialist at UNESCO's International Institute for Capacity Building provided a brief examination of UNESCO's [1997 Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher Education Teaching Personnel](#). Dr. Awopegba began by discussing ways in which the 1997 recommendation complements and extends the earlier 1966 ILO/UNESCO recommendation on the status of teachers, by extending its reach to all higher education teaching and research personnel. The key issues addressed in the 1997 recommendation include: professionalism, institutional autonomy and accountability, individual rights and freedoms, terms and conditions of employment. Dr. Awopegba then described the work of the Joint ILO/UNESCO Committee of Experts on the Application of the Recommendations concerning Teaching Personnel (CEART) whose task is to monitor and promote the application of the two Recommendations and to advise ILO and UNESCO on better ways to promote knowledge and use of these standards by and within Member States.

Ousmane Sène, Director of the [West African Research Centre](#) (WARC), Senegal provided a brief examination of the [Dar es Salaam Declaration on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of Academics](#) (adopted in 1990 by delegates from staff associations from six institutions of higher education in Tanzania) and the [Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility](#) (adopted at a CODESRIA-organised symposium on intellectual freedom in Africa held in November 1990). Dr. Sène emphasized the importance of situating the declarations historically and drew comparisons in tone ("We are living in momentous times") between these declarations and others such as the [Lima Declaration](#) of 1988. He pointed to the strong connections made in the African declarations between civil society and academic freedom; social responsibility and the intellectual. He noted in conclusion that the Kampala declaration should have dealt more comprehensively with the question of marketisation of higher education and the question of equal opportunity in higher education including gender equity.

Taye Assefa, Director of Research at FSS, provided an overview of the 2007 Recommendations of the National Conference on Academic Freedom in Ethiopian Higher Education Institutions. In 2006, FSS undertook case studies of major public and private higher education institutions, using UNESCO's 1997 Recommendation as a conceptual framework for assessing the situation in Ethiopia. In April 2007, when the research was completed, FSS held a two-day conference to generate public debate



on the issues. The case studies revealed that clashes at universities were a recurring phenomenon; classes were commonly disrupted; most university leaders were unaware of the existence of the UNESCO recommendations, had not incorporated these into university charters and were not using them as guiding principles. Although rules and regulations relating to academic freedom existed, these were often ignored. FSS issued a series of recommendations to pave the way forward. The survey was the first of its kind to be conducted in Ethiopia and the recommendations have now been widely disseminated.

Discussion highlights:

- It was argued that universities have too often become forums for opposition of ruling systems. The question was raised whether academics would make more progress if they freed themselves from political affiliation so that they could present their case for academic freedom ‘nakedly’. Several voiced disagreement with this ‘solution’. Academic work takes place in a political context. Therefore one cannot divorce politics from academic work. However, open affiliation with a political entity may compromise the impartiality and objectivity which are the hallmarks of academic research and should inform academic freedom.
- It was noted that there is often a very weak linkage between universities and parent government departments or ministries. More should be done to strengthen such relationships between universities and departments or ministries of education.
- If good governance is the basis for academic freedom and if academic freedom exists within the context of the nation, then how can universities be any better than the countries in which they exist? Are levels of institutional autonomy and academic freedom tightly determined by levels of good governance? To what extent can universities be engines for change, be rights-promoting?
- Universities should provide a platform for public debate, a space to accommodate academic freedom and autonomy and put it on the agenda for consideration of the authorities.
- Civil society has a key role to play in advancing academic freedom. Universities do not exist in a vacuum.
- One of the biggest threats facing universities is commercialization or privatization within institutions.
- If one of the biggest threats in public universities is commercialisation or privatisation within institutions, how can best ensure that we remain progressive and do not compromise our academic freedom ideals?



- Many universities fail to implement the directives issued in the UNESCO Recommendation. Universities outside the main cities do not realise there is a recommendation in existence.

Session 2: Perspectives on Academic Freedom in Different World Regions

Abdu B.K. Kasozi, Executive Director of the National Council for Higher Education in Uganda chaired the second session. Dr. Kasozi began by stating the need to rethink institutional autonomy and the role of the state in higher education at a time when market models of the university may be on the rise, even as international financial markets may be entering a period of collapse.

Nizam Assaf, President of the [Arab Society for Academic Freedom](#) discussed the Society's work to build a model of regional cooperation among scholars in the Arab World. Dr. Assaf discussed the range of problems currently faced by academics in the region and the extent to which authorities regularly intervene in the life of academic communities by interfering in administrative procedures and admissions policies. He described his own organisation's work to address these issues over the past several years. The Amman Center for Human Rights Studies held its first conference on academic freedom in 2004. Fifty professors participated from universities in eleven countries. At a second conference in 2006, participants expressed a desire to establish an academic freedom society and asked the Amman Center to coordinate its establishment. In 2008, a regional conference on Academic Freedom in



Arab Universities was held in Jordan in partnership with SAR, NEAR and the United Nations University. The Arab Society for Academic Freedom was formally launched on April 2, 2008. The Society aims to disseminate information relating to academic freedom in Arab universities; to provide advice and support for academics and to set up a legal defence fund for academic work. He finished by expressing his eagerness to learn more about how the Arab Society for Academic freedom might best work with African counterparts.

Gueorgui Kassianov, Director of Education Programs at the [International Renaissance Foundation](#) in Ukraine summarized current academic freedom issues in Ukraine and discussed the University Autonomy Initiative, a project launched in 2005 by the Renaissance Foundation to address these issues. The university autonomy initiative aims to create a model of university autonomy; enhance university



community participation in governance; personalize university responsibility for results and ultimately attain greater institutional autonomy (in governance, management, property, personnel policies, academic freedoms etc.). The initiative involves several phases/activities including developing expertise and analysis (comparison to world practices, legal expertise), lobbying (Presidential office, Parliament, ministry), public events (seminars, round-tables, conferences), polling (of students, teaching staff, administration), media campaign and sector piloting (quality monitoring, self-governance, academic ethics, qualification procedures). Dr. Kassianov concluded by advising participants on the kinds of questions to be asked before undertaking such an initiative.

Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua, Senior Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, University of Ghana discussed academic freedom and the experience of his university. After a brief examination of the theoretical foundations and justification for academic freedom, Dr. Appiagyei-Atua outlined the experience of the University of Ghana in relation to academic freedom issues from the 1960s to the present day. He gave examples of the most important potential internal threats to academic freedom (including government-academic relations, government-student relations, academic-student relations, and senior academic-junior academic relations) and potential external threats (e.g. ways in which sources of research funding influence research priorities; influence of the demands of international student communities on curriculum). He then made a set of recommendations which included, amongst others, working towards a better student-teacher ratio, establishing transparent and democratic means of promoting staff, working to improve relations with government, more networking with civil society actors, teaching students to challenge authority in appropriate ways and educating civil society about academic freedom.

Jonathan Travis, Program Officer at the Network for Education and Academic Rights (NEAR) introduced his organisation's work. NEAR's primary activity is to bring international attention to violations of academic freedom and educational rights through an Action Alert Program. Mr. Travis described the different types of threats reported to NEAR which can be classified as follows: threats to individuals from outside the university; threats to individuals from inside the university; and institutional threats. The top countries currently reporting threats are Iran, China, Zimbabwe, Russia, Israel/Palestine. An Action Alert issued by NEAR informs its audience of a violation or an abuse of academic freedom or educational human right and invites the reader to take effective action.

Discussion highlights

- To continue to talk of the 'invisible hand' of the market is naive. Higher education leaders need a greater understanding of the ways that markets function, how they are manipulated and how this impacts on higher education policy.



- More open discussion is needed on the role of students in promoting or inhibiting academic freedom. Students can sometimes prevent progress, whether through religious activism, excessive strike action, etc. If half the student population is on strike, what happens to the other half?
- Most public universities were until recently funded by the government, had never had to learn how to develop independent sources of funding and are now required to do so with great haste. How does this impact on academic freedom?
- Discussion of the University Autonomy Project in Ukraine, the strategies it uses to promote equity, the factors it takes into consideration when rating an institution's level of autonomy (including composition of curriculum, transparency in funding and fundraising processes, governance structures, rules of academic ethics etc).
- Discussion of status of academic freedom in the Arab World and how faculty have dealt with interference from government intelligence agencies.
- If positive developments occur such that academic freedom is enhanced within individual universities in Africa, does this enhance the autonomy of the African academy as a whole?
- Discussion of the issue of 'Academics for Sale'. If, for financial reasons, academics need to spend more time working on consultancy contracts with business, NGOs or scholars from abroad, how can they also find time/energy to advance their own research agendas?

Session 3: Case Studies on Academic Freedom in East African Countries

Ousmane Sène chaired Session 3.

Elizabeth Ayalew, Assistant Professor at the College of Education, Addis Ababa University examined the extent to which peer review is facilitating or undermining the production and dissemination of knowledge, by analyzing accountability and transparency in the peer review process of three well-reputed journals. Ms. Ayalew outlined her findings and conclusions, arguing that despite its special status and (supposed) self-regulating mechanisms, the peer review process falls victim to problems relating to poor accountability, partiality and subtle favouritism. She concluded, with reference to the ten interviews in her study, that the confidentiality policy commonly employed had not ensured that the review process was neutral/ bias-free; and lack of accountability and transparency had limited and determined the type of knowledge produced. She recommended a more open review process that encourages self-appraisal and includes the use of technology-supported data management systems.



Frederick Gravenir, Director of University Advancement at Kenyatta University conducted a review of academic freedom in universities in Kenya in two different periods: before and after 2002. Before 2002, the major violations of academic freedom generally consisted of external interference with university activities, including government prevention of public lectures, arrest of editors of university newspapers, banning of student newspapers, interference of intelligence police, active censorship, presence of informants in lecture halls, problems obtaining research permits, arrest and detention of academics, banning of academic associations/unions, and restrictions on travel. Since 2002, academic freedom has been most impacted—positively and negatively—by policies and practices within the higher education sector, such as those for the appointment of Chancellors, Vice-Chancellors and Deputy Vice-Chancellors, processes for the recruitment and promotion of faculty, the electoral process of student & staff unions, and those resulting from the increasing corporatisation or commercialization of higher education. Professor Gravenir pointed to the key role that fair remuneration plays in allowing faculty to concentrate on their core functions and argued that allowing universities greater autonomy leads to increased productivity of faculty which in turn will promote national and regional development. He concluded that there are signs of good progress in academic freedom related issues in Kenya in recent years.

Consolata Kabonesa, Head of the Department of Women and Gender Studies at Makerere University, addressed gender dynamics and academic freedom in institutions of higher learning, in particular at Makerere University in Uganda. Dr. Kabonesa described the move towards a greater degree of gender equality in recent years in particular with the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies and their incorporation in the university's strategic plan 2008/9 to 2018/19. She outlined a small-scale survey carried out to obtain women and men's perspectives on academic freedom. In the course of the survey 21 females and 9 males were interviewed, ages 28 – 59, at all levels of seniority (from teaching assistant to professor) from different academic and administrative units. Dr. Kabonesa described and classified respondents' knowledge of academic freedom, how it related to gender, their views on individual achievements and whether respondents thought Makerere University was doing enough to promote academic freedom.

Abdu B.K. Kasozi, argued that institutional autonomy and academic freedom are linked to the ability of universities to raise funds, especially from non-state sources. The freer and more accountable a university is, he argued, the more likely it is to deliver quality education, which in turn increases its credibility and therefore ability to raise funds. Dr. Kasozi stated that since 1970, the raising and proper utilization of funds by public universities in Uganda has been hindered by state interference in the way universities are run, by external attacks on the academic freedom of members of university communities and by occasional lack of accountability on the part of universities in the way they manage finances and the academic processes. The state has often intervened to stop public universities from raising funds from fees, research



grants or to cut welfare components that would have saved money for core academic areas.

Session 4: Case Studies on Academic Freedom in East African Countries

Bol Deng Chol, Director of the Centre for Languages and Translation at the University of Juba, Sudan, chaired Session 4.

Johnson Ishengoma, Lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Dar Es Salaam addressed the question of donor-funded research and how the funding of universities related to academic freedom. His methodology consisted of documentary evidence, anecdotal evidence and personal experience. He argued that the model of consultancy-funded research forces academics to focus their work on areas of research determined by the sponsor in order to survive, rather than being able focus on those areas of research that they as scholars determine to be the most interesting or promising. This is especially troubling when sponsors from outside of Africa end up controlling the research agenda within Africa. At his own university, the percentage of the budget sourced externally has grown in recent years from 19% to 62%, which represents, in his view, a kind of dependence on governments and donors that has wide-ranging implications for the practice of academic freedom.

Ng'wanza Kamata, Lecturer in the Department of Political Science at the University of Dar Es Salaam, argued that university autonomy should be enshrined in the university's charter and academic freedom considerations should be intrinsic to the charter-writing process. Not enough faculty/administrators have a good knowledge of academic freedom issues. If people are oblivious to the gains to be had with greater university autonomy and academic freedom, it is too easy for those gains to be lost.

Jose Mathai, Head of the Department of Applied Statistics at the National University of Rwanda (NUR) examined the state of affairs with respect to academic freedom at NUR after the disturbances of 1990s, and identified the areas in need of attention from the administration in order to further promote academic freedom. The following dimensions of academic freedom were examined: the right to fulfil the functions of teaching, research, writing, learning, exchanging and disseminating information and providing services; freedom of movement and freedom to travel; the right to teach without interference; right to demand and receive explanation from any organ, official or administrator; freedom to maintain contact with counterparts; and freedom to pursue the development of educational capacities. The study also looked at the rights of students. In Dr. Mathai's view, the NUR case highlights how a national government in a post-conflict scenario with committed leadership can provide good direction.

Mustafa Babiker, social anthropologist at the Development Studies and Research Institute at the University of Khartoum, spoke about academic freedom issues in Sudan. He described the sense of optimism within the academic community generated by the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that promised immense



constitutional changes and legal reforms. A brighter future for academic freedom and university autonomy was anticipated. However, three years later optimism has begun to fade away. Dr. Babiker argued that no serious efforts had been undertaken to translate the pledges enshrined in the 2005 Interim National Constitution into legal provisions for the restoration and protection of academic and other freedoms. Dr. Babiker discussed, in particular, two issues of priority concern to the Sudanese academic community, namely, personal academic freedom of staff for teaching, research and association; and institutional freedom of university self-governance.

Hamad Hawi, of the Department of Political Science at the University of Juba addressed what he described as the most important challenges facing higher education in Africa in recent times, namely, challenges related to the following: national higher education policy frameworks, shortage of funds, privatization and marketisation; academic freedom and university autonomy; the problem of brain drain and the role of the Diaspora. Dr. Hawi provided an overview of the effects of these problems on knowledge production, development and transmission, and then went on to propose some possible reforms. Dr. Hawi also mentioned that a recent conference on Academic Freedom and University Autonomy in post-conflict Sudan addressed many of the issues raised and the role of the university after the signing of a peace agreement.

Tayeb Jalal Deen, Professor of Geography at the University of Khartoum addressed the issue of academic freedom in Sudanese universities in a politico-historical context. In Dr. Jalal Deen's view, the degree to which the university can carry out its responsibilities and accomplish its goals depends on, among other things, the state of academic freedom and its academic, administrative and financial autonomy. He discussed the status of academic freedom before the independence of Sudan in 1956 up to the present time, with emphasis on the last two decades under the rule of the National Congress Party (NCP) (the former Muslim Brothers and then the National Islamic Front-NIF). He pointed to the need for academics to pay attention to their responsibility towards students and to remember that promoting our own professionalism will bring public support in and of itself. In addition to building national support for the university, it is also important to build a broad coalition with similarly-minded organisations internationally.

Discussion highlights

- Can academic unions do more to promote academic freedom in African universities? Are union representative's too often soft targets? Are they adequately protected? Are they too focused on issues of remuneration? How can academic staff collaborate with student organisations?
- How can academics that have been forced to flee their home country offer assistance to their colleagues back home?



- Several arguments were offered in defence of funding agencies, acknowledging that many funders give a wide berth to the university and do respect the university's own priorities. But it was also recognized that others have narrower requirements/focus.
- It was considered vital to remember that academic freedom is not a European concept and that human rights are universal.

The first day's proceedings concluded at 6pm. Dinner followed.

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22

**WORKSHOP ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM – DEVELOPING A GLOBAL
FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH AND RESPONSE**

Session 1: Presenting a Draft Common Framework for Analysis and Stages of Response

Taye Assefa chaired the first session on day two. Robert Quinn opened proceedings by presenting a draft common framework for analysing threats to academic freedom. The draft document was developed by SAR and NEAR. The framework document aims to classify the most common academic freedom concerns in order of severity and then to classify possible local, national, regional and global responses to these concerns. Participants were asked to test the framework against two case examples provided in the workshop materials and against their own experience. In order to test the framework, participants were asked to decide: (i) Whether or not the classifications make sense? (ii) Whether or not all important concerns are represented? (iii) What other responses might not be represented? and (iv) What new tools or strategies for response might be created?

Dr. Assefa opened the discussion by asking participants to look at the framework to see if there are other barriers that people know about that have not been reflected? Or other mechanisms of response? Dr. Assefa made some of his own suggestions for addition to the framework document. These included: recognition of how academic freedom issues affect students (e.g. suspensions); denial or delay of promotion of staff, even after approval by senate/board; denial of annual leaves; academics being forced to teach during summer vacation; forced to transfer to another faculty; forced to teach other courses; denial of right of representation in board of governors or senate; denial of right to assemble; occupation of campuses and armed police stationed on campuses; daily frisking of students/staff; and employment of academic staff in non-academic work. Dr. Assefa also pointed to the need to ensure greater provisions for regional engagement. By way of example, he suggested that if the Inter-University Council for East Africa does not include in its mandate issues such as university autonomy, participants might lobby for inclusion of such. He mentioned



also that the Association of African Universities (AAU) has observer status with the African Union (AU), and that might be examined to see whether and how that channel can be used to greater effect.

After some preliminary discussion about the framework document, participants broke into four small groups to discuss the two case studies.

Session 2 & Session 3: Working Groups on Individual Issues & Working Groups on Institutional Issues

Small-group discussions were built around the two case studies circulated in advance. Each group had two facilitators and one reporter. Participants were asked to read the case studies and to discuss (i) How/whether the elements in the case were familiar to them? (ii) If they had experienced anything similar at their universities/in their countries? and (iii) How might the faculty or administrators in the case studies might have reacted more strategically?

Session 4: Plenary Discussion about Case Studies

Participants re-convened and Robert Quinn chaired a plenary discussion about the case studies. Discussion groups were asked to report back on their groups findings. Participants were then asked whether they would recommend any changes/additions to the common framework document.

Highlights of the plenary discussion included:

- Several participants remarked that the case studies captured many of the types and patterns of academic freedom related concerns that they themselves or their colleagues had experienced.
- Student and youth groups play a vital role in developing response strategies to academic freedom concerns on campus.
- Participants suggested that the following issues also be taken into account in the framework document: governance concerns, peer review, social responsibility, capability concerns (library access etc), self-censorship, need to appease donors, lack of access to electronic journals, invasion of privacy, security of tenure, impact of commercialisation, privatisation of education. In particular, it was widely agreed that a greater emphasis should be given to how access to resources impacts on academic freedom and how social responsibility relates to academic freedom.
- It was suggested that some of the categories listed under personhood concerns be made clearer.

- Inter-university cooperation within a country could be listed as a vehicle for response. Regionally, it was suggested that the African Association of Universities (AAU) should be encouraged to act with greater conviction in these areas.
- There is a need for university rectors to be sensitized about the issues.
- Several participants pointed to the need for the framework to incorporate examples of how researchers are being increasingly expected to gear their research to known results i.e. ‘mercenary research’.
- Some argued that though academic freedom conditions had improved in most countries in the region there was still a greater need to link academic freedom issues to notions of duty, social responsibility and commitment to societies.

As discussion closed, Mr Quinn thanked participants for their extremely valuable insights and suggested additions to the document. He commented that SAR and NEAR would rework the documents to incorporate the ideas and suggestions presented during this session.

The second day’s proceedings concluded at 5pm. Dinner followed.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 23
RESPONSES AND ACTIVITIES FOR FOLLOW-UP RESEARCH AND ACTION

Session 1: Outreach to African Universities

Frederick Gravenir chaired this session in his role as primary representative to the Scholars at Risk Network at Kenyatta University (member of the SAR network). Sinead O’Gorman, SAR Deputy Director, presented the goals of the session which included: providing an opportunity for participants to learn more about Scholars at



Risk’s activities; inviting suggestions and advice on involving more African universities in the network; and inviting advice on membership models. Ms. O’Gorman provided an overview of SAR’s current and proposed future activities with African universities; described the role of the primary representative and asked for feedback and input on additional potential joint activities.

Participants were asked to encourage their university’s involvement in network activities. Professor Gravenir described his own experience as primary representative



at Kenyatta University and facilitated the short discussion that followed on how to involve more African universities.

Session 2: Discussion of possible follow-up activities

Akim Mturi, Deputy Executive Director at OSSREA chaired a discussion on follow-up activities. Participants were invited in advance of the event to submit proposals for follow-up activities. Proposals were read aloud during this session and divided into five categories for the purposes of discussion:

- *Proposals for regional organization:* These included a proposal to establish a working group on forming an African Society for Academic Freedom; proposal to establish an African Forum for Academic Freedom; proposal to establish a Center for the Study of Academic Freedom in African Universities and a proposal to establish national working groups.
- *Proposals for partnerships / solidarity:* These included an invitation to the join SAR and NEAR networks, respectively; a proposal to strengthen gains in academic freedom through inter- and intra-university actions; a proposal to strengthen academic freedom through staff associations; a proposal to strengthen academic staff associations; and a proposal to hold a similar conference or workshop for academic staff and student union representatives.
- *Proposals for research activities/research partnerships:* These included the SAR World Academic Freedom Survey; HEI's rating on academic freedom; research on the challenge of information/communication technology (ICT) and its impact on academic freedom; research on gender and academic freedom; research on the role of social responsibility of academics; and a proposal for establishing a Journal of Academic Freedom.
- *Proposals for workshops:* These included proposals for a workshop on Academic Freedom in Kenya's Universities; a National Conference and Workshop on Academic Freedom in Rwanda; workshops for Vice Chancellors and their deputies; and workshops for academic staff and student unions.
- *Proposals for new tools/advocacy campaigns:* These included a proposal for establishing an International Academic Freedom Day; urging priority actions on the themes of autonomy, responsibility and academic freedom at the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education in Paris in 2009; the formation of an academic freedom blog or newsletter; and creation of an international academic freedom media review.

The merits of each proposal were discussed in a lively debate ahead of the final session.



Session 3: Developing Final Recommendations and Plan of Action

Saida Othman, Director of Research and Publications at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, chaired the final session.

Discussion highlights:

- The importance of incorporating notions of social responsibility and how these relate to academic freedom was reiterated. It was suggested that SAR's World Academic Freedom Survey might include social responsibility as one of the survey values.
- With regard to proposals on promoting research in the area of academic freedom, it was suggested that participants respond to calls for proposals for papers and presentations on academic freedom and university autonomy and that they circulate such calls widely on a national and regional level.
- It was agreed that the AAU and CODESRIA are key partners in issues surrounding academic freedom and university autonomy in the region and should be brought back into the discussions as soon as possible. Robert Quinn again expressed regret that representatives from CODESRIA were unavailable to attend this particular meeting and emphasised SAR and NEAR's commitment to working with CODESRIA on these issues in the region, as well as in SAR and NEAR's global efforts.
- There was discussion on the advantages and pitfalls of rating universities with regard to their commitment to academic freedom. However, it was agreed that additional data on academic freedom was needed to continue to draw attention to the issue. Participants interested in getting involved in the SAR World Academic Freedom Survey will contact Scholars at Risk.
- It was agreed that additional workshops- whether for VCs, staff associations, student unions or other- would be useful. SAR and NEAR indicated that they would be happy to partner with universities and individuals on joint-proposals for support for workshops at a national level.
- It was suggested that SAR, NEAR and the proposed African Academic Freedom Network might request a speaking role on the program of the next AAU conference. Participants agreed to work towards this possibility.
- It was agreed that before launching any Journal on Academic Freedom that it would be a good idea to begin with a newsletter, academic freedom blog and/or media review. SAR and NEAR committed to exploring next steps toward a newsletter or blog and to report to the African network committee members.



- Several participants expressed interest in working together to develop a Code of Ethics/Code of Conduct for academics.
- There was much discussion on how best to take the work forward on a regional level. Rather than establishing a new organisation, it was agreed that it would be wise to grow a regional network of committed individuals. Representatives from the different regions present at the meeting were selected to begin this work. From the North-East, the network representatives are Jalal Deen Tayeb and Elizabeth Ayalew; from West Africa, Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua and Ousmane Sene; from East Africa, Sharon Haba and Muga Kolale. It was suggested that these representatives in turn suggest national focal points so that work can progress simultaneously at a national and regional level.

In conclusion, it was agreed that the most strategic way forward was to use, strengthen and maximise the resources already at-hand. It was emphasised that even though this was a regional gathering, that participants need first and foremost to be active in their home countries and to promote these issues first in their own institutions.

In closing remarks, SAR and NEAR thanked all participants and co-hosts for the very fruitful and enjoyable discussions and expressed their hope that the group would continue working closely together in the coming weeks and months.

The meeting concluded at 1pm.