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## Education

### Prof. Ddumba elected to African universities' board

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Prof Ddumba-Ssentamu and his Nkozi University counterpart Prof Charles Olweny during the conference  
newvision

By John Eremu in Libreville, Gabon

MAKERERE University vice chancellor, Prof. John Ddumba-Ssentamu has been elected to the governing board of the Association of African Universities (AAU).

Ddumba together with Prof. Tolly Mbvette of the Open University of Tanzania will represent the East African region on the 13-member board. The board is the association's top policy organ.

The elections at the just concluded 13th AAU general conference in the Gabonese capital, Libreville, saw Prof. Olusola Oyewole of the Federal University of Agriculture, Abeokuta, Nigeria, emerged unopposed as president.

Prof. Marc-Louis Ropivia of Omar Bongo University was elected vice-president for central Africa, while Prof. Russel Botman of Stellenbosch University in South Africa and Karrar Ahmed Bashir Elabbadi of Omdurman Ahlia University in Sudan, retained their seats as vice-presidents for southern and eastern Africa respectively.

AAU is the top organisation and principal forum for consultation, exchange of information and co-operation among African universities.

It was established in 1967 with its headquarters in Accra, Ghana.

The four-day conference at the Okoume Palace Hotel was also marked by technical presentations and discussions on the theme: "Transforming African Higher Education for Graduate Employability and Socio-economic Development."

It brought together 291 delegates from universities across Africa as well as donor representatives.

The outgoing president, Prof. George Magoha, of Nairobi University, challenged the new board to grow the association membership, ensure universities offer relevant courses and to fight brain drain.

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"We have over 1,500 higher institutions of learning in Africa, but it is a bit of a shame that we have not been able to move the membership even beyond 300," Magoha said.

He said although Africa has good scholars, most of the graduates remain unemployed or end up going for greener pastures abroad.

"For the AAU to be relevant, we must do something more to ensure that the people we spend so much money to train do not go to die somewhere near London. Someone will say that is a political problem; for us we are academics, but no, we are also part of the politics," Magoha said amidst applause.

Oyewole pledged that the new board will support the secretary general to achieve the associations plans and programmes.

He said his priorities include making African universities relevant for the development of the continent.

"We should make sure that our graduates have the skills and competences that not only make them employable, but also able to create jobs," Oyewole said during his maiden press conference.

In a communiqué at the end of the conference, the university heads noted the low level of graduate employment in Africa; lack of attention from governments, universities and organised private sectors to confront unemployment and the socio-political factors affecting employability.

They agreed on a multi-layered and targeted advocacy with different audiences on the need to address the social and political factors to ensure employability.

They also agreed to engage all available means to provide effective solutions to graduate employability in order to transform higher education.

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