African Academy of Languages (ACALAN)

African Union Commission

Report

Statutory Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee

8 – 9 December 2016
Statutory Meeting of the Scientific and Technical Committee of the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN).

8 - 9 December 2016

Bamako, Mali
**Table of contents**

Introduction ........................................................................................................ 5
Proceedings of the meeting ................................................................. 5
Opening ceremony ......................................................................................... 5
ACALAN triennial report ............................................................................. 7
Commission report highlights ................................................................. 12
Review of ACALAN’s projects and programmes ........................................... 14
Way forward and recommendations ......................................................... 17
Closing session ............................................................................................ 20
Annexes ....................................................................................................... 22
### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACALAN</td>
<td>African Academy of Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMALAN</td>
<td>Académie malienne des langues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AU</td>
<td>African Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUC</td>
<td>African Union Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CELHITO</td>
<td>Centre of Linguistic and Historical Studies through Oral Tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CERDOTOLA</td>
<td>International Centre for Research and Documentation on African Traditions and Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CICIBA</td>
<td>International Centre of Bantu Civilizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRA</td>
<td>Documentalist and Research Assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAC</td>
<td>East African Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EACROTONAL</td>
<td>Eastern African Centre for Research on Oral Tradition and National Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECCAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of Central Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community Of West African States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Finance and Administrative Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLT</td>
<td>Human Language Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MACALAN</td>
<td>Mission for the African Academy of Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFP</td>
<td>National Focal Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OAU</td>
<td>Organisation of African Unity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OIF</td>
<td>Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANMAPAL</td>
<td>Pan-African Master's and PhD Program in African Languages and Applied Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RLC</td>
<td>Regional Languages Centres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIL</td>
<td>Summer Institute of Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPPO</td>
<td>Senior Programme and Project Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRPO</td>
<td>Senior Research and Programme Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCLC</td>
<td>Vehicular Cross-Border Language Commission</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The African Academy of Language (ACALAN) organised a two-day meeting of its Scientific and Technical Committee, on 08 and 09 December 2016, held at ACALAN headquarters in Bamako, Mali. In accordance with the statutes, rules and procedures of ACALAN, the meeting brought together eminent personalities, members of its Scientific and Technical Committee, from Africa and Europe, including the President of the Assembly of Academicians, who is also Chairperson of the Scientific and Technical Committee, Selected heads of the National Language Structures and Chairpersons of the Vehicular Cross-border Language commissions, specialists and representatives of institutions and international organisations such as UNESCO and OIF, and representatives of African Civil Society Organisations.

The objectives of the meeting, as stipulated in article 14 of the statutes, were to examine the activities of ACALAN, taking into account its action plan and assist the Secretariat in the preparation of its 2017 Programme of activities and their implementation as well as advise the Secretariat on specific technical matters.

Proceedings of the meeting

Opening session (Day one - 8 December 2016):

The opening session which was under the Chairmanship of Professor Abdulhamid Abubakar, Chairperson of the Hausa Vehicular Cross-border Language Commission, comprises of three remarks as follows:

The first remarks were made by Honourable Adama Samassekou Founding Executive Secretary of ACALAN. He expressed his joy for having met again with friends at such an important meeting. According to Honourable Samassekou, the Academy was facing rather difficult situation, which needed to be redressed.

Welcoming the delegates present, he expressed his gratitude about the presence of the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, H.E. Ambassador Oumar Daou, at the opening of the meeting. This, he said, shows the importance that Mali has attached to this vital institution as an instrument for the African Renaissance. He continued to say that he was greatly honoured to address the meeting after so many years had elapsed after taking leave of office. He thanked the acting Executive Secretary for inviting him to come in now and again to offer his advice to the Secretariat.

He thanked the Secretary General for agreeing to brace the occasion, saying that this shows commitment of the Mali government to Africa languages. He said that the meeting coincides with the 10th anniversary of the birth of ACALAN, which also reminds us of many Decisions taken at the continental level that year, including the
Revised Charter for the African Cultural Renaissance, the Language Plan of Action for Africa, the Second Decade of Education for Africa, the Linkage between Culture and Education. All of these major decisions were a real turning point for the African Union in implementing the African Renaissance.

The second remarks were given by the President of the Assembly of Academicians of ACALAN, Emeritus Professor Ayo Bamgbose. Professor Bamgbose after thanking the Government of Mali for its support to ACALAN, reminisced the history of ACALAN, and told the delegates that the organisation started as MACALAN before becoming ACALAN. He eulogised the many years when the government of Mali paid ACALAN workers their salaries, and that even today the government has continued to support the academy. He also thanked the founding Executive Secretary for the great work he did for ACALAN and for his continued support.

Insisting on the need to appoint an Executive Secretary, a position that has been vacant for more than one year, Professor Bamgbose highlighted the issue of financing ACALAN’s programmes as another major challenge that needs to be surmounted. He noted that language Commissions need to be shown direction and for ACALAN to do this, it has to have the means to be able to monitor Commission activities. He concluded by welcoming all the delegates to the meeting, which he stated was long overdue.

The third remarks were by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. In his opening speech, Ambassador Oumar Daou affirmed that no country can develop without its languages. That is why, “the government adopted on December 3, 2014, Mali’s National Language Policy, document thus making national languages tools for development in all spheres of life.”

Ambassador Oumar Daou hoped that this high-level scientific and technical meeting would be an opportunity for language specialists to once again conduct an in-depth analysis on the problems about language development in Africa and to decide on the major projects of the ACALAN. Oumar Daou assured the delegates of the availability and support of the government to work towards the objectives of ACALAN, namely the promotion and the valorisation of African languages. "My country, Mali, is proud to host this specialised language institution of the African Union. I remain convinced that the outcomes of this meeting will contribute more to making our languages true vectors of development, integration and social cohesion in our societies that today need so much peace and security."

He articulated his hopes that the outcomes of the meeting will make these languages vehicle of development and peace in Africa. He ended his remarks by again welcoming the delegates to Mali, and declared the meeting open.

The opening session was followed by a group photo, and the introduction of participants and then the adoption of the programme without amendment.

The second session started with a presentation of the context of the workshop by the acting Executive Secretary, Dr Lang Fafa Dampha, who reminded the delegates of
the Statutes of ACALAN that make provision for the existence of the Scientific and Technical Committee, its functions and structure, which performs advisory functions, alongside other organs. According to article 14 of the statutes, he continued to say, the functions of the Committee are to:

i. Assist the Executive Secretary in the preparation of the programme of activities of ACALAN;
ii. Advise the Board and the Executive Secretary of specific technical matters brought to its attention;
iii. Advise on the implementation of the activities of ACALAN;
iv. Provide such advice as may be requested by the Board or by the Executive Secretary and;

The objectives of the statutory meeting as stipulated in the ACALAN statutes was to review ACALAN’s activities, taking into account its Plan of Action; and assist the Executive Secretariat in the preparation of its programme of activities for 2017 and in their implementation. He also highlighted the expected outcomes from the meeting which include ACALAN’s activities being reviewed, taking into account its Plan of Action and the Secretariat being assisted in the preparation of the programme of activities of ACALAN and in their implementation.

He expressed his gratitude to the Government of Mali which has initiated the creation of ACALAN and has maintained ACALAN since its creation in 2001 and continued to support the academy. This, he said; was exemplified by the presence of the Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Mali and the fact that the founding Executive Secretary, Honourable Adama Samassekou, had been accompanying the Secretariat. He thanked all the participants and congratulates the language commissions and focal points for their dedication and support to the Secretariat. He concluded by expressing his confidence and urging the Committee members to critically look at ACALAN’s activity reports, project proposals and other activities.

**ACALAN triennial report**

ACALAN’s triennial report covering January 2014 to November 2016, was presented by the Ag Executive Secretary. He explained that the report focused on the establishment of its two working structures, namely the sub-regional Vehicular Cross-border Language Commissions (VCLC), the National Focal Points (NFP) of ACALAN in the Member States, as well as its organs, namely the Governing Board, the Scientific and Technical Committee and the Assembly of Academicians.

Dr Dampha, in his presentation, informed the delegates that the Secretariat also intensified its campaign to have focal points designated by Member States for ACALAN, according to the provisions of its statutes. The report pointed out that
Zimbabwe, Togo, Senegal, Liberia, the Comoros and Mozambique, have recently designated focal points for ACALAN. The Secretariat equally continued to implement some of its six core projects, including the Linguistic Atlas of Africa, and the Corpus project for Kiswahili as a component of the African Languages and the Cyberspace project. According to the report, ACALAN also transformed some of the priority areas of the Vehicular Cross-border Language Commissions into implementable projects. These include the Training of Teachers in L1 Methodology and capacity building in project management for the Vehicular Cross-border Language Commissions. ACALAN also engaged in visibility and advocacy campaigns, which include missions in view of making its activities and programmes known to the public and relevant stakeholders to create more synergies and partnerships.

The report presented the following perspectives of ACALAN, in its effort to continue fulfilling its mandate, realising its objectives and providing relevant guidance to policies favourable to the development and promotion of African languages:

i. To be more proactive in resource mobilisation as one of our major activities. Project funding proposals have been written and presented to partners, banks, and other businesses in the context of Corporate Social Responsibility.

ii. To continue establishing ACALAN’s working structures and organs, and implement its core projects as well as transform the priority areas of its sub-regional Vehicular Cross-border Language Commissions into implementable projects;

iii. To continue harmonising the writing systems of vehicular cross-border languages, and creating terminologies and corpora for them;

iv. To give impetus to research on African languages in collaboration with language research institutions by developing and coordinating research activities on languages and collecting and disseminating the results of linguistic research;

v. To put more emphasis on the provision of technical support to each Member State to formulate and implement a language policy, and to establish and/or develop national structures for the promotion of African languages;

vi. To continue on the project of elaborating a linguistic atlas of Africa;

vii. To strengthen regional African structures responsible for culture and oral tradition, with a view to partnership and complementarity;

viii. To modernise African linguistic tools through the use of Information and Communication Technologies thus making it possible to effectively bridge the digital divide;

ix. To continue having teachers trained in First Language (L1) methodologies as a factor of promoting the use of African languages as a medium of instruction and as official and working languages;

x. To continue archiving documents and establishing data banks relating to African languages;
xi. To encourage publication in African languages by instituting and allocating prizes and awards to organisations and persons contributing to the promotion of African languages.

The report presented the following operational challenges for ACALAN:

i. Very low programme budget, which was not released in 2015 and 2016; this adversely affected ACALAN’s activities and programmes.

ii. There has been a very slow pace of response from the Ministries of Culture or Education in the Member States of the African Union to ACALAN’s request to have National Language Structures designated or established to serve as its focal points as stipulated in ACALAN’s statutes; this affected ACALAN’s operations especially in Member States.

iii. ACALAN’s organogram has made provision for fifteen (15) staff including 8 professional staff. However, the academy now operated with seven (7) staff amongst whom only four (4) are professional staff. Since August 2015, it has been operating with one (1) SRPO, who is also acting as Executive Secretary, one (1) SPPO, one (1) FAD, one (1) DRS and no Secretary for three months now. This situation adversely affected ACALAN’s operations especially for the past 8 months.

iv. During the last statutory meeting of the Governing Board of ACALAN in July 2015, the Board recommended that ACALAN’s budget be separated from that of the Department of Social Affairs so that attention is given to certain details of its activities.

v. The most challenging part of ACALAN’s work we try to surmount is to have attitude change vis-à-vis the statuses and capabilities of African languages especially the attitudes of Africans themselves. One of the major problems affecting ACALAN’s work is that language matters are not the development discourse of most African States. This reflects the lack of essential support for African languages at the policymaking level. Most policymakers put culture and languages at the periphery of their development programmes. We are therefore urging our leaders and policymakers to render the necessary support to our efforts to develop and promote our values and cultures of which our languages are one of the main components.

vi. The functioning of ACALAN’s working structures i.e. the VCLC and the NLS, and that of the Secretariat need to be improved in terms of organisational and institutional capacity building.

vii. There should be a closer collaboration between the Department of Social Affairs (ACALAN) and Human Resources, Science and Technology (Division of Education).
The report highlighted that in spite of ACALAN’s limited means, and numerous challenges ACALAN is facing, most of the activities realised between 2014 and 2016, were satisfactorily carried out and the objectives of ACALAN have relatively been attained. ACALAN also progressively increased its visibility by strengthening partnership and creating synergies with organisations and institution involved in the development and promotion of African languages.

Dr Dampha continued to say that the fact that ACALAN is the main specialised language institution of the African Union and that its working structures having the expertise to provide technical assistance gives it a comparative advantage. It therefore offers a window of opportunity for partnership and cooperation as its activities add value to the efforts for endogenous development in the perspective of consolidating African integration and development. ACALAN’s work being geared to raising the statuses of African languages and facilitating cooperation amongst African countries sharing the same languages, he said, makes it a factor of the integration and development of the African peoples.

He concluded his presentation saying that cultural development is inevitably one of the main factors of the sustainable development of a people, therefore the development of African languages as the pillar of African cultures is an indispensable factor of African integration and development.

The presentation of ACALAN’s triennial report was followed by other presentations by experts and representatives of ACALAN’s working structures.

Dr. Tunde Adegbola, Executive Director of African Languages Technology Initiative (Alt-I) and ACALAN’s resource person for Human Language Technology HLT, made a presentation on Alt-I partnership with ACALAN. He pointed out that Africa did not benefit much from the Industrial Revolution because it failed to incorporate the revolution in its languages. He continued to say that in this age of Information revolution, if Africa had problems domesticating the Industrial Revolution, it even faces tougher problems domesticating the information revolution. Dr Adegbola, highlighting the ICT paradox, said that ICT can either improve or worsen our circumstances, stressing that Africa needs clear understanding of the information revolution and definite policies.

He said that African countries officialising foreign languages, are telling young people that understanding these languages is the only way to learn anything. He stressed that the languages become impediments and the situation worsens at the introduction of ICT, and that going by this, Africa will never have enough people to participate in development.
He advised that Africa can use ICT to enhance literacy, oral traditions, if the computer is empowered; and also use computers to translate amongst African languages. Each language has useful knowledge that can be presented to the global community and some of this can be used to solve global problems. He warned that any language which is not part of the information age will live at the periphery. Consequently, Africa has to address the challenge of availability of corpora-collection of documents in the computer.

Dr Adegbola defined resource-scarce languages as those languages with no corpora. Many languages, he said, do not feature in newspapers, very few allowed in parliamentary activities, stressing that there is urgent need in Africa to ensure that the daily use of African languages ends in documentation, as a way of developing corpora. He cited one arena where there is high potential for documentation as being radio and TV but most of whose content is thrown away without being documented, and advised ACALAN to encourage a deliberate policy to ensure that no efforts in translation are wasted without documentation.

Citing the African Union report of bridging the digital divide and in telecommunication terms getting the telecommunication to the homes, he said that African languages are key to bridging this divide in order to have every African access to information. The language connection is important for ACALAN and other agencies should take care so as not to lose all the other efforts. He also noted that producing animation is a very important tool for language dissemination.

Members then made comments on the presentation and asked questions. The President of the Assembly who was also the Chair of the Committee, voiced his concern that the presenter was preaching to the converted and asked how the information can be passed on to those key stakeholders who do not know.

Dr Adegbola responded that he expects ACALAN to act as a go between because it is in the best position to do so.

The Founding Executive Secretary contributed by saying that people do not believe in African languages and that is why ACALAN exists in the first place, therefore priority should be given to African languages and Human Language Technology.

The next presentation on corpus was done by Dr. Simon Sewangi, Director of BAKITA, which is the National Kiswahili Council in Tanzania, and resource person of ACALAN for terminology and corpus development. He defined corpus as a complete or large and structured set of texts, written and spoken usually electronically processed and stored in computers. He said that ACALAN and BAKITA (BARAZA LA KISWAHILI LA TAIFA) are implementing a corpus project on Kiswahili for Africa to start having corpus of its languages.

Dr Sewangi said that BAKITA had been collaborating with ACALAN and participated in its workshops on African Languages and the Cyberspace. The objective of the first workshop, which took place in Dar es Salam, United Republic of Tanzania, from December 12 to 14, 2014, were to discuss modalities of developing linguistic
corpus for African languages and subsequently spell-checkers with special reference to Kiswahili; as well as to consolidate the network of ICT experts.

The second workshop was a four-day training proper on corpus building in Kiswahili was held at the University of Dar es Salaam, United Republic of Tanzania from 24 to 27 March, 2015. It aimed principally to train researchers in collecting existing Kiswahili corpus while building new ones. At the end of the training workshop, eight research assistants and linguists from Kenya, and Tanzania were trained and equipped with computational linguistic skills, and how to make use of technology in Kiswahili corpus and terminology development. The researchers are presently working in the field collecting Kiswahili corpus.

Dr Sewangi said that the corpora resource once compiled will be used purely for promoting learning and where necessary permission will be sought during the collection. The capability of computers to save a language relies on the availability of corpora.

**Commission report highlights (Full reports in annexes)**

The **Luganda -Lusoga -Lugwere Commission** presentation highlighted the language situation in Uganda and the activities of the Commission. The challenges included lack of funding, lack of office space and need for capacity building.

The **Kiswahili Commission** report highlighted the language situation in East Africa and showed how governments were embracing Kiswahili, however the Commission is challenged by lack of commitment and participation from focal points.

The **Yoruba Commission** presentation discussed the language situation, the activities and challenges of the Commission. Challenges included lack of funding, failure to register the Commission and lack of interest by the members of the Commission leading to the chairman doing all the work alone.

The **Malagasy Commission** report highlighted the need for ACALAN to officialise its relationship with the Comoros and the need to have focal points in Madagascar and the Comoros.

The **Hausa Commission** report highlighted disgruntlement of the Commission members after ACALAN failed to conduct a workshop for the linguistic atlas in 2013 as had been agreed and when they also failed to honour a contract with them in 2012 which had involved the translation of some documents into Hausa assigned to them by ACALAN. The President of the Hausa Commission requested ACALAN to sort the issue so as to win confidence of the members of the Commission. He commented that very few know about the existence of ACALAN and suggested that ACALAN should publicise its work and activities.

The **Fulfulde Commission** cited the problem of not having a website, lack of funding, and recommended the review of ACALAN’s operations to have more achievable activities.

The **Focal Point** from the Democratic Republic of Congo report stressed the challenges of protecting Congo’s 250 languages and the challenges of having the
government review the constitution and promote the four national languages (Swahili, Kikongo, Lingala and Tshiluba) to official language status. Lack of Materials, he said, was also cited as a problem especially to the teaching of these languages. There is also need to harmonise the writing system, as presently, spellings vary according to regions.

The Madinka Commission report showed that most of the projects it set out to implement have not been implemented by the Commission due to lack of funding.

**Comments and questions to Commission reports.**

**ACALAN:**

The Acting Executive Secretary of ACALAN said the websites for language Commissions to be linked to ACALAN’s website would be encouraged as part of ACALAN’s “Temporary Assistant” programme. ACALAN, he said, assisted AMALAN, its focal point in Mali to have a website which is functioning very well. The Secretariat will use its “Temporary Assistant” budget line to finance minor projects of its working structures, at least one project per annum. Therefore, opportunity still stands for ACALAN to host websites and finance small activities for its working structures.

On the issue of not paying for the Hausa translation services, just like those of the Fulfulde Commission in 2012, the resignation of the then Head of the Culture Division at the African Union Commission, according the former Executive Secretary, hampered the payment, consequently the problem could not be solved.

The failure to jointly organise the workshop on the linguistic atlas in the West Africa region was due to organisational misunderstanding; but ACALAN promised to work with the Hausa Commission and all the other Commissions.

The Malagasy Commission Chairperson explained that the Malagasy language was greatly enriched by Kiswahili and commenting on Kiswahili was inevitable because Kiswahili is the mother of the Malagasy language.

The delegate (focal point) from the DRC was advised to borrow a leaf from Nigeria’s policy in which a child begins education in his/her mother language as a way of protecting the 250 languages even though that would not entirely solve the lack of teachers.

The Acting Executive Secretary of ACALAN informed the Malagasy Commission Chairperson that a focal point for the Comoros had been nominated, but that of Madagascar is still lacking. He asked her to assist trying to have a focal point designated for ACALAN in Madagascar. A letter would, he said, be sent to the Ministry in Charge of the promotion of African languages and she would be asked to follow it up.

The Kiswahili Commission Chairperson expressed the view that Focal Points were not active that he did not know the focal points in the other countries of East Africa where Kiswahili is spoken.
The Founding Executive Secretary of ACALAN said that the activities of the Commissions should be assessed in order to bring them back in line with the vision and also enable them to be part of the Assembly of Academicians. He noted that the number of Academicians should be increased. He also noted that the three language commissions under the territory of ECOWAS were not working well whereas ECOWAS was the first REC to collaborate with ACALAN in developing African languages in its region. He commended the good work done by the Commissions but recommended that ACALAN gives them more support.

Review of ACALAN’s projects and programmes (Day two - 9 December 2016)

The morning session chaired by Professor AWOBULUYI Oladele, Chairperson of the Yoruba VCLC started with comments and questions on ACALAN’s activity report presented by the Acting Executive Secretary the preceding day.

The President of the Assembly noted the objective of the second workshop on teacher training, which was organised from 10 to 15 August 2015, to trained Setswana teachers in First Language (L1) methodologies has not been set out correctly, because the training of teachers cannot be done in two days.

The Senior Programme and Project Officer of ACALAN, Dr Ojo Babajide Johnson, responded that teacher trainers were selected from the Commission members after consultation on the criteria. A poly-technique in Zimbabwe was involved in writing the modules that were used. He said that in Namibia a whole week was used to train the teachers and the teachers who did the training were Setswana experts. A follow-up on the training programme was not possible in 2016 because of the lack of programme funds.

The founding Executive Secretary said that ACALAN should continue to support its structures and on mobilisation, as one of its key role is about creating opportunities for harmonising orthographies. ACALAN therefore should re-orientate its activities so as to make its vision clearer.

ACALAN responded by saying that no major programs have been done for 2015-16 because of lack of funds. All that the Secretariat did was resource mobilization and sensitization.

The Acting Executive Secretary said that ACALAN is a tree and the Secretariat is only a branch of that tree in charge of administration and coordination; meaning that each structure and organ has a role to play. He said that statutory meetings should regularly take place to put things in the right pipeline. He proposed for the creation of a network to which all commissions will have access so that they can work together effectively. ACALAN, he continues to say, is also a research institution and one of its main functions is to encourage publication in African languages by instituting and allocating prizes and awards to organisations and persons contributing to the promotion of African languages. He informed the delegates that ACALAN had already discussed with the AU library under the Department of Strategic Planning, Programming and Budgeting to get ISBN for its publications starting with the Harmonisation book on African languages and the Proceedings of the African Renaissance Conference.
It was noted that ACALAN should prioritise and involve the other organs in its decision making process. Delegates wanted feedback on the vehicle and money stolen from ACALAN’s account, and the ACALAN land that had been repossessed. The Secretariat informed the meeting that the Board had met and the responsibility to follow-up the case had been given to the Founding Executive Secretary. The issue of Commissions doing fundraising for their projects came up and some members thought that this would undermine the Commissions. Others felt that Commissions were in position to identify donors for their activities so they should go ahead and look for money to fund their projects with the support of ACALAN. However, it was agreed that meetings and trainings should be funded by ACALAN.

On the issue of harmonising ACALAN’s work with other structures, the meeting noted that ACALAN cannot operate without other institutions, therefore there should be coordination to avoid duplication. The Acting Executive Secretary informed the meeting that the Secretariat is trying to do that. He gave an example with ACALAN trying to collaborate with the OIF in its ELAN programme by proposing to OIF to use languages whose orthographies has already been harmonised by ACALAN.

The Senior Programme and Project Officer then presented the following core projects of ACALAN.

1. Linguistic Atlas for Africa (LAA);
2. The Pan-African Master’s and PhD Program in African Languages and Applied Linguistics, (PANMAPAL)
3. Stories Across Africa (STAAF)
4. African Languages and the Cyberspace (ALC)
5. The Terminologies and Lexicography (TL)
6. Pan African Center for Translation and Interpretation (PACTI)

Other programmes presented were:
- Teacher training program in L1 methodology
- Training media practitioners in the use of African languages terminologies
- Award of Prize of Excellence for writers in African languages in collaboration with ECOWAS
- Reading Clubs

The presenter highlighted the following as difficulties affecting ACALAN.
- Paucity of funds
- Lack of autonomy to carry out responsibilities
- Leadership focus before the present interim period
- Organisational climate
- Isolation

It was suggested that ACALAN explore new avenues to broaden its horizon and make its fund-raising ventures. The problem of staffing needs to be resolved for the effective functioning of the academy.
The UNESCO delegate noted that ACALAN needed the services of a professional resource mobiliser to assist in resource mobilisation.

A need to enhance the skills of focal points was highlighted as political will is needed in order to develop African languages.

The OIF delegate proposed collaboration and institutional support in skilling ACALAN’s working structures in resource mobilisation. He also informed the meeting that the organisation is working on language framework and methodological guide for languages and pledged collaboration to commissions to have experts to work on different issues.

The founding Executive Secretary noted that ACALAN should continue to play its rightful role in helping member states of the African Union to come up with proper language policies and that it is important that ACALAN revisit it vision.

The Second session that followed was again chaired by Prof Awobulu Oladele.

The Senior Programme and Project Officer then presented the joint ACALAN – UNESCO Linguistic Atlas project proposal and the Oxford University Press proposed collaboration for a Kiswahili terminology and lexicography training.

He informed the meeting that the atlas is on African Union’s agenda 2063 and UNESCO’s agenda 2030 so the two institutions got into a joint venture to do the African chapter which UNESCO can use as part of its *World Atlas of Languages*. He told delegates that a proposal was sent to UNESCO for review and now ACALAN was presenting it to its Scientific and Technical Committee for peer review.

The members appreciated the project as being fair and balanced and pledged their commitment to it. However, it was noted that the project document had omitted mentioning the Assembly of Academicians which is also a prominent organ of ACALAN. The Secretariat explained that the President of ACALAN’s Assembly of Academicians will head the Scientific Committee of the project. The Chairperson of the Yoruba Commission, Professor AWOBULUYI Oladele asked why a Federal states like Nigeria has only one university like the others as partners in implementing the project. A point of information was given that the universities were coordination centres where linguistic trainings will take place. It was also noted that some of the selections have a political rhyming with African Union guidelines of geographic spread. There were also questions as to whether endangered languages will also be considered.

The Acting Executive Secretary said that accounting for endangered languages is part of the objectives of the ACALAN-UNESCO proposed linguistic atlas project; he continue to say that ACALAN in its collaboration with UNESCO in elaborating the map will maintain ownership of this project.

It was also brought to ACALAN’s notice that EACROTANAL mentioned in the project document is no longer functional and in its place is the East African Kiswahili Commission. The Acting Executive Secretary said that ACALAN is well aware of this
and that efforts have been made through the African Union Commission and the East African Community to revive the Centre and ACALAN will continue to work on that.

The Oxford University Press proposed collaboration with ACALAN in conducting terminology and lexicography courses in Kiswahili as part of their living Dictionary project that was presented to the Scientific and Technical Committee of ACALAN for review was not accepted by the Scientific and Technical Committee for being “unbalanced”.

The way forward and recommendations.

The following recommendations:

1- On funding:
   i. The decision of the governing board to separate ACALAN’s programme budget from that of the department of Social Affairs should be implemented.
   ii. There should be a separate budget line for the statutory meetings to cover all the statutory meetings stipulated in the statutes of ACALAN.
   iii. ACALAN should approach the African Union to discuss funding issues.
   iv. The Secretariat should set up a strategy for resource mobilization, which will work on the capacity of people to raise funds should be put in place.
   v. The Executive Secretary should write letters to empower Chairpersons of Language Commissions to participate in the Secretariat’s fund-raising exercise.

2- On ICT
   i. Priority should be given to the presence of African languages in cyberspace with a view to reviewing ACALAN’s African languages in cyberspace project and transforming it into a programme.
   ii. ACALAN should encourage the development of a deliberate policy to ensure that African languages develop corpora so that all translations are documented and stored.
   iii. ACALAN should find ways of collaborating with different associations and individuals who have developed corpora.
   iv. ACALAN should encourage African universities to start programmes in natural language processing.
   v. ACALAN, African language linguists, computer scientists and other relevant professionals should initiate a solid project on ensuring everybody gets access to information through availing African languages on the cyberspace.
   vi. ACALAN should identify individuals who have experience in the Microsoft localisation project and involve them in the terminology project.
   vii. As an extension of the Stories Across Africa project, ACALAN should encourage the production of animated films on African stories for African children.

3- On re-orienting ACALAN and popularising its activities
i. The Secretariat should in consultation with the President of the Assembly of Academicians revisit the ACALAN plan of action so as to update its priorities and activities.

ii. ACALAN should be more active in monitoring the implementation of the Khartoum Declarations and Decisions especially the Revised Charter for the African Cultural Renaissance, the Language Plan of Action for Africa and the Linkage between Education and Culture.

iii. ACALAN should advocate for language policies that put African languages in the member states of the African Union to the fore.

iv. ACALAN should ensure that its approaches privileged partners of African Union to advance the course of African languages, otherwise the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) may never be achieved with the languages being left behind.

v. The AU should equip ACALAN to support the member states in elaborating language policies and implementing them in Education.

vi. ACALAN through its focal points should go back to the African Union and ask for reform of the Khartoum Declarations and Decisions.

vii. The Secretariat should develop a strategic communication plan that can help give ACALAN more visibility.

viii. Focal points should make ACALAN visible in their countries and in order to attain this, the right people should be selected as focal points.

ix. The amendments to ACALAN’s statutes should be validated to enable strengthening staff numbers.

x. ACALAN should move away from projects to programmes that can generate effectiveness.

xi. In order to strengthen its activities, ACALAN should be transformed to become an organ of the African Union.

4- On relationship between the Secretariat and Language Commissions

i. ACALAN should have periodic meetings with Commissions.

ii. The Acting Executive Secretary should make a list of complaints of the Commissions so that they be revisited.

iii. The Secretariat should intensify interactions with the working structures of ACALAN, and financially support the Commissions using the temporary assistance budget line.

iv. ACALAN should support the Commissions to register by giving them support letters.

v. Each member of the Commission should be given a letter that identifies them as members of ACALAN. (The acting Executive Secretary will retrieve the letter and distribute to Commission heads).

vi. Commissions should have a global vision and not to limit themselves to a few activities only.
vii. ACALAN should develop a plan to disseminate its work and that of its Commissions.

viii. Language Commissions should review their plan of action and forward reports to ACALAN.

5- On protecting DR Congo’s 250 languages
i. DR Congo was advised to introduce a policy in which a child begins education in his/her mother language as this would help protect the 250 languages.

6- On enlarging the Assembly of Academicians
i. The meeting of the Assembly of Academicians should be the next statutory meeting in view of reviving the Assembly and expanding its membership.

7- On harmonising the work of ACALAN with other structures
i. There should be coordination between the activities of ACALAN and those of other structures in the member states of the African Union.

ii. ACALAN should make use of existing institutions in its teacher-training programme in L1 methodology.

iii. The Secretariat should propose a framework with institutions in charge of the promotion of languages on the continent to re-establish the relationships between ACALAN and other institutions.

8- On building the Pan-African Centre for Interpretation and Translation.

i. ACALAN should with the support of UNESCO contact UN Habitat for assistance in building the Pan-African Centre for Interpretation and Translation.

ii. ACALAN should set up an African terminology data bank.

9- On the linguistic Atlas of Africa

i. The Assembly of Academicians, as one of the key organs of ACALAN should be included in the project document of the UNESCO-ACALAN Atlas of African Languages project by being selected on the Scientific Committee for the project.

ii. ACALAN should provide a French language copy of the UNESCO ACALAN project proposal.

Closing remarks
Prof. Charles Binam Bikoi, Executive Secretary of the Center for Research and Documentation of Oral Traditions and Development of African Languages, (CERDOTOLA) addressed the meeting and pledged to work with ACALAN for the development of African languages. About the Linguistic Atlas for Africa project, he informed the meeting that CERDOTOLA had devised methodology and activities for this project.

He later distributed the report of the meeting jointly organized by ACALAN and CERDOTOLA on the linguistic atlas in Younede in December, 2012.

The President of the Assembly of Academicians thanked the CERDOTOLA delegate for his contributions. The President of the Assembly of Academicians informed
the delegates that what was left was for people to do their part because what needs to be done had already been identified. “We should make our Heads of State know that languages are at the centre of civility, therefore development is an illusion if we do not develop and promote our languages”, he concluded.

He appreciated the contributions of the participants, thanked the OIF delegate and the other delegates for their remarkable contribution, and wished all the delegates a happy 2017 in advance, and safe return to their countries.

A vote of thanks was delivered by Madam Mariam Coulibaly Kone, Director of AMALAN, who thanked members for their participation on behalf of AMALAN as the focal point of ACALAN and the Malian government.

Outcomes of the meeting

The activities of ACALAN were reviewed taking into account its plan of action;
Assistance was given to the Secretariat to prepare the programme of activities of ACALAN and monitor their implementation.
Recommendations were made for the revitalisation of ACALAN

Annex

List of participants

Presentations