

Nineteenth Session of the 1983 Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific (Bangkok Convention) Committee

Sixth Session of the Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (Tokyo Convention) Committee

Fifth Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres (APNNIC) Plenary

17-19 November 2025, Bangkok, Thailand

Transforming Higher Education in Asia-Pacific: Shifting Landscape and Emerging Priorities

Higher education is a cornerstone of SDG 4 and the Transforming Education Agenda, driving inclusive, quality learning and lifelong opportunities. It empowers individuals with skills for employment, innovation, and civic engagement, while fostering equity, social mobility, and sustainable development. As a hub for research and knowledge creation, higher education is essential for building resilient, future-ready societies.

Globally, higher education is undergoing rapid transformation, with enrolment more than doubling over the past two decades to 264 million students, and women now outnumbering men. The global gross enrolment ratio rose from 19% in 2000 to 43% in 2023. In the Asia-Pacific, growth has been even more significant, with enrolment increasing over four-fold, from 15% to 62% during the same period—reflecting both expanding access and rising demand for higher education across diverse populations.¹ As more students than ever are accessing higher education, so are more learners studying across borders. The global number of internationally mobile students more than tripled during the last two decades, rising from 2.1 million in 2000 to nearly 7.3 million in 2023. The Asia-Pacific region is rising as a hub for cross-border higher education mobility, accounting for around 30% of all internationally mobile students in 2021, while hosting 18.5% in the same year.

Meanwhile, the use of **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** in higher education is increasingly widespread, including digital credentialing, blockchain solutions, and AI-driven verification systems. While the use of AI can bring benefits such as reducing administrative burden and improving efficiency, it should be guided by ethical principles to support rather than replace human decision-making. A human-centred approach to AI in education, including qualifications recognition, is emphasized in the [UNESCO Recommendation on the ethics of AI](#) adopted by all UNESCO member states in 2021 and the [joint statement of UNESCO Regional Conventions Presidents](#) issued in January 2025.

Educational fraud, including diploma mills and accreditation mills, is a growing area of concern among member states in the Asia-Pacific. The use of AI to generate deep fakes is adding to its severity and complexity. To ensure the quality of and public trust in higher education systems and institutions, international cooperation in combatting fraud should be strengthened through information sharing on member states' higher education systems, qualifications and quality assurance, exchange of good practices, and capacity building of credential evaluators and quality assurance systems.

UNESCO Global and Regional Conventions as catalysts to transform Higher Education

In this context, the **UNESCO [Global](#) and [Regional](#) Conventions on Higher Education** offer an inclusive, comprehensive and forward-looking framework for fair, transparent and timely recognition of qualifications,

¹ UNESCO, 2024, "Higher Education: figures at a glance" <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000389069>

facilitating mobility and greater regional integration of higher education in the Asia-Pacific. They are key instruments to improve equitable access to quality higher education and lifelong learning opportunities while leaving no one behind, as enshrined in SDG target 4.3.

Since the [Fifth Session of the Tokyo Convention Committee](#) in November 2023, member states across the Asia-Pacific have made progress towards building stronger higher education systems and a more integrated higher education landscape. This includes progress towards ratification of the Tokyo and Global Conventions, developing National Qualifications Frameworks (NQFs), strengthening quality assurance systems, and enhancing cooperation among National Information Centres (NICs) to enhance mutual understanding of higher education systems, trust and recognition of higher education qualifications. The Asia-Pacific Network of National Information Centres (APNNIC), as a key implementation structure of the Tokyo Convention, has played an important role by facilitating information sharing via the [APNNIC portal](#), capacity building and technical support for better understanding of the Global and Tokyo Conventions' benefits and their operationalization, and building a regional community of practice, including through the [Fourth APNNIC Plenary](#) (3 – 4 December 2024) and a [capacity building webinar series](#).

At the global level, the [Second Session of the Intergovernmental Conference of the States Parties](#) took place on 24-25 June 2025 and adopted a new work programme (2025-2027). The [Operational Guidelines of the Global Convention](#) were published, while three new subsidiary texts are developed on the relationship between the Global Convention and regional conventions, Quality assurance and transnational education, Qualifications recognition for refugees and displaced persons. These global developments will guide and inform the ways forward for Asia-Pacific.

In this context, from 17 to 19 November 2025, states parties and observers to the Bangkok and Tokyo Conventions and APNNIC members will convene in Bangkok, Thailand for the **Sixth Session of the Tokyo Convention in conjunction with the Nineteenth Session of the Bangkok Convention and the Fifth APNNIC Plenary**, organised by the UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok and Office for UN Coordination for Asia and the Pacific (Secretariat of the Bangkok and Tokyo Conventions and APNNIC) and the New Zealand Qualifications Authority.

Key objectives of the sessions:

- Raise awareness and understanding of the benefits of both Tokyo Convention and the *Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education* to increase ratifications of both Conventions.
- Discuss emerging trends in higher education and exchange good practices to advance a deeper understanding of the diversity of qualifications, education and training systems, and qualifications recognition systems within the Asia-Pacific region, contributing to building inclusive and flexible lifelong learning systems.
- Identify opportunities to strengthen regional and inter-regional cooperation and the community of practice of higher education policymakers and practitioners through information sharing and provision amongst States Parties, NICs, and through the APNNIC network, to operationalise UNESCO Conventions through combating educational fraud, the ethical use of AI, and recognition of diverse qualifications, including non-traditional, transnational, and refugee qualifications.



Monday 17 November 2025 – Bangkok, Thailand
Nineteenth Session of the Bangkok Convention Committee

Time	Item	Details
15:00 - 15:30	-	Afternoon tea Registration (All States Parties to the Bangkok Convention) ²
15:30 - 15:40	1	Opening of the Nineteenth Session of the Bangkok Convention Committee Meeting
		Details: Welcome remarks
		Speakers: Ms. Apsara Caldera, Additional Secretary (Development), Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Vocational Education, Sri Lanka
		Ms. Marina Patrier, Deputy Director and Chief of Education, UNESCO Bangkok, Secretariat of the Bangkok Convention Committee
15:40 - 15:45	2	Adoption of the agenda and report of the Eighteenth Session of the Bangkok Convention Committee
		Chair: Ms. Apsara Caldera, Additional Secretary (Development), Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Vocational Education, Sri Lanka
		Speakers: All States Parties
15:45 – 15:55	3	Report from the Secretariat
		Chair: Ms. Apsara Caldera, Additional Secretary (Development), Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Vocational Education, Sri Lanka
		Speaker: Ms. Marina Patrier, Deputy Director and Chief of Education, UNESCO Bangkok, Secretariat of the Bangkok Convention Committee
15:55 - 16:45	4	National plans to ratify and implement the Tokyo Convention
		Chair: Ms. Apsara Caldera, Additional Secretary (Development), Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Vocational Education, Sri Lanka
		Speakers: All Participants
16:45 - 16:55	5	Election of the Bangkok Convention Committee Bureau
		Chair: Ms. Marina Patrier, Deputy Director and Chief of Education, UNESCO Bangkok, Secretariat of the Bangkok Convention Committee
		Speakers: All States Parties
16:55 - 17:00	6	Draft report and closing of the Nineteenth Session of the Bangkok Convention Committee

² As of November 2025, the Parties to the Bangkok Convention are: Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Holy See, India, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Maldives, Mongolia, Nepal, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Türkiye.

		Chair:	Ms. Apsara Caldera, Additional Secretary (Development), Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education, Higher Education and Vocational Education, Sri Lanka
		Speakers:	Rapporteur of the Bangkok Convention Committee, Kazakhstan



Tuesday 18 November 2025 – Bangkok, Thailand
Sixth Session of the Tokyo Convention Committee

Time	Item	Details	
08:30 – 09:00	-	Registration (All participants)	
09:00 – 09:15	1	Opening of the Sixth Session of the Tokyo Convention Committee	
		Speakers	- Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of the Tokyo Convention Committee - Soohyun Kim, Regional Director, UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok and Office for UN Coordination for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCO Bangkok)
09:15 – 09:20	2	Adoption of the agenda and report of the Fifth Session of the Tokyo Convention Committee	
		Speaker	Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of the Tokyo Convention Committee
09:25 – 09:30	3	Report from the Secretariat	
		Chair	Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of the Tokyo Convention Committee
		Speaker	Marina Patrier, Deputy Director and Chief of Education, UNESCO Bangkok, Secretariat of the Tokyo Convention Committee
09:30 – 09:40	4	Update on the implementation of the Global Convention	
		Speaker	Noah Webster Sobe, Chief of Higher Education Section, UNESCO Headquarters (online)
09:40 – 09:55	5	Progress on the Tokyo Convention Roadmap to 2030	
		Details	Building on the discussion at the 2023 Tokyo Convention Committee Session, this session will report on progress made to the Tokyo Convention Roadmap and provide guidance for the next session of group discussions.
		Speaker	Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of the Tokyo Convention Committee
09:55 – 10:15	-	Morning tea	
10:15 – 11:30	6	Group discussions and reporting to plenary: next steps of the Tokyo Convention Roadmap to 2030	
		Details	This interactive session is an opportunity to reset the Tokyo Convention Roadmap. Participants will discuss in small groups and report back to plenary.



		Chair	Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of the Tokyo Convention Committee
		Speakers	All Participants
11:30 – 12:30	7	Panel discussion 1: Building a community of practice and fostering inclusion	
		Details	The panel will share insights on fostering collaborative communities and offer perspectives on different subjects, for example on the role of Artificial Intelligence and lifelong learning.
		Chair	Meekyung Shin, Director, Education Globalization Division, Ministry of Education, Republic of Korea
		Speakers	• Xing Xiong, Director, Department of Overseas Credentials Evaluation Service, Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange, People's Republic of China • Prof. Shingo Ashizawa, Advisor, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Japan • Melanie Rosenbaum, Head, International Centre for Recognition, Dicastery for Culture and Education, Holy See, Rapporteur of the Tokyo Convention Committee
12:30 – 13:30	-	Lunch	
13:30 – 14:30	8	Panel discussion 2: Working collectively to combat educational fraud	
		Details	Education fraud is an extremely lucrative industry. This panel will be a high-level policy discussion for speakers to share insights into how they are combatting this growing challenge.
		Chair	Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of the Tokyo Convention Committee
		Speakers	• Stig Arne, President of the Intergovernmental Conference of the States Parties to the Global Convention • Nadia Starr, CEO, South African Qualifications Authority • Yangmei Han, Deputy Director of Degree Division, Centre for Student Services and Development, Ministry of Education, People's Republic of China • Bo (Simon) Zhou, Deputy Director, Department of Overseas Credentials Evaluation Service, Chinese Service Centre for Scholarly Exchange, People's Republic of China
14:30 – 15:00	9	Adoption of the revised Rules of Procedures of the Tokyo Convention	
		Chair	Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of the Tokyo Convention Committee Bureau
		Speakers	Marina Patrier, Deputy Director and Chief of Education, UNESCO Bangkok, Secretariat of the Tokyo Convention Committee All States Parties

15:00 – 15:20	-	Afternoon tea	
15:20 – 15:50	10	Adoption of '2025 Statement by States Parties to the Tokyo Convention'	
		Chair	Marina Patrier, Deputy Director and Chief of Education, UNESCO Bangkok, Secretariat of the Tokyo Convention Committee
		Speakers	All States Parties
15:50 – 16:10	11	Election of the Tokyo Convention Committee Bureau	
		Chair	Marina Patrier, Deputy Director and Chief of Education, UNESCO Bangkok, Secretariat of the Tokyo Convention Committee
		Speakers	All States Parties
16:10 – 16:30	12	Draft report and closing of the Sixth Session of the Tokyo Convention Committee	
		Chair	Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of the Tokyo Convention Committee
		Speakers	Melanie Rosenbaum, Head, International Centre for Recognition, Dicastery for Culture and Education, Holy See, Rapporteur of the Tokyo Convention Committee
18:00 – 19:30	Welcome reception (Avani Hotel Sukhumvit) hosted by UNESCO Bangkok		

Wednesday 19 November 2025 – Bangkok, Thailand Fifth APNNIC Plenary			
Time	Item	Details	
09:00 – 09:15	1	Opening of the Fifth APNNIC Plenary	
		Speakers	- Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of APNNIC - Marina Patrier, Deputy Director and Chief of Education, UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok and Office for UN Coordination for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCO Bangkok), Secretariat of APNNIC
09:15 – 09:20	2	Adoption of the agenda	
		Chair	Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of the APNNIC Bureau
09:20 - 09:35	3	Report from the Secretariat	
		Chair	Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of APNNIC
		Speaker	Marina Patrier, Deputy Director and Chief of Education, UNESCO Bangkok, Secretariat of APNNIC
09:35 - 10:30	4	Update and group discussions: The APNNIC Action Plan	
		Details	Following the update, this interactive session is for participants to contribute new actions to the APNNIC Action Plan.
		Chair	Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of the APNNIC
		Speakers	Update – APNNIC Bureau members and Secretariat of APNNIC Discussion – All Participants
10:30 – 10:50	-	Morning tea	
10:50 – 12:00	5	Panel discussion: Plans to ratify the Tokyo Convention	
		Details	The panel will share their journey towards ratifying the Tokyo Convention and joining APNNIC.
		Chair	Joanna Wilson, Director, Qualifications Recognition, International Division, Australian Government Department of Education
		Speakers	- Ahmed Shafeeu, Minister of State for Higher Education, Labour and Skills Development, Maldives - Prof. Dr. Supachai Pathumnakul, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Research and Innovation, Thailand - Myrna Mallari, Commissioner, Commission on Higher Education, the Philippines - Yerzhan Irgebayev, Deputy Director, National Centre for Higher Education Development, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Republic of Kazakhstan
12:00 – 13:00	-	Lunch	

13:00 – 13:50	6	Thematic presentations and discussion: Operationalising the UNESCO Conventions – practical perspectives on combatting fraud	
		Details	This session showcases practical examples of how education fraud is being addressed in operational settings.
		Chair	Prof. Rie Mori, Executive Director, National Information Centre for Academic Recognition Japan (NIC-Japan)
		Speakers	- Henry Stephenson, Credential Evaluator, Qualifications Recognition Services, NZQA - Nadia Starr, CEO, South African Qualifications Authority: SAQA's operational guidelines on combatting fraud - Yangmei Han, Deputy Director of Degree Division, Centre for Student Services and Development, Ministry of Education, People's Republic of China
13:50 – 14:40	7	Interactive discussion: Operationalising the UNESCO Conventions: challenges and opportunities of recognising refugee qualifications and transnational education	
		Details	This session dives into different aspects of operationalising the Tokyo Convention, for example challenges and opportunities of recognising qualifications held by refugees and displaced persons, and the recognition of partial studies in the context of transnational education.
		Chair	Joanna Wilson, Director, Qualifications Recognition International Division, Australian Government Department of Education
		Speakers	- Stig Arne, President of the Intergovernmental Conference of the States Parties to the Global Convention - JungEun Lee, Director, Korea Academic Recognition Information Centre, Korean Council for University Education - Dr. Canan Ünvan, Head, ENIC-NARIC Office & APNNIC Office, Department of Recognition and Equivalence Services, Council of Higher Education, Türkiye
14:40 – 15:20	8	Country Spotlight	
		Details:	This session features countries sharing their latest initiatives and experiences in qualifications recognition.
		Chair:	Reo Tanaka, Team Leader International – Quality Assurance, New Zealand Qualifications Authority
		Speakers	- Prof. Rie Mori, Executive Director, National Information Center for Academic Recognition Japan (NIC-Japan): Japan's National Qualifications Framework - Dashdorj Munkhbat, Head of National Information Centre, Mongolian National Council for Education Accreditation, Mongolia - Aitzhan Kulumzhanova, Head of Internationalization of Higher Education Office, National Centre for Higher Education Development, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Republic of Kazakhstan - Ani Lacanivalu, Professional Officer – Programmes Accreditation, Fiji Higher Education Commission, Fiji

15:20 – 15:50	-	Afternoon tea	
15:50 – 16:05	9	Election of the APNNIC Bureau	
		Chair	Marina Patrier, Deputy Director and Chief of Education, UNESCO Bangkok, Secretariat of APNNIC
		Speaker	All States Parties
16:05 – 16:30	10	Draft report and closing of the Fifth APNNIC Plenary	
		Chair	Dolly Seow-Ganesan, Manager Qualifications Recognition Services, New Zealand Qualifications Authority, President of the APNNIC Bureau
		Speaker	Melanie Rosenbaum, Head, International Centre for Recognition, Dicastery for Culture and Education, Holy See, Rapporteur of the APNNIC Bureau