



## **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION IN CAPE VERDE AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXTS**

**(Praia and Mindelo, 8–9 April 2027)**

*“Education is the most powerful weapon  
we can use to change the world” (Nelson  
Mandela)*

*“Learn from life, learn from our people,  
learn from books and from the experiences  
of others. Always keep learning!”  
(Amílcar Cabral)*

### **Concept Note**

#### **1. SUMMARY OF JUSTIFICACION**

Cape Verde is a medium-income island nation, geographically situated in the Global South. The fact that it was a former Portuguese colony did not prevent it (quite the contrary) from asserting its unique identity, cultivated internally and preserved within its own diaspora through education, work, and the ability to withstand adversity, thereby constituting, over time, a factor in the consolidation of the Cape Verdean nation and an essential reference point for its progress and integration into various international contexts.

Thanks to the efforts of society and public authorities, with the support of international cooperation, Cape Verde has been committed to building an educational system capable of meeting the national challenges of human and sustainable development a goal to which the higher education subsystem

contributes. This subsystem, which initially relied exclusively on training professionals abroad (until 1979), has since experienced explosive growth

in local educational offerings, without curtailing the demand for education at foreign universities.

The International Conference will thus serve as an appropriate forum for deepening our understanding of the current state and evolving trends in higher education as it fulfills its core functions of research, training, and outreach, both in the national context and in other international contexts, with the aim, in particular, of welcoming critical contributions regarding the repositioning of academic institutions in the face of the challenges, opportunities, and trends arising from global political, cultural, and economic changes, including the expansion of digital technologies, climate change, and new trends in the reconfiguration of power relations worldwide.

## **2. CONTEXT**

With five decades of independence, Cape Verde is at a turning point in its higher education system. Indeed, despite advances in the expansion of this most advanced level of education and research, inequalities in access and enrollment persist, due primarily to the combined effects of the economic and financial vulnerability of most families and insufficient coverage of costs under the government's social welfare policy. Furthermore, the challenges of ensuring scientific and pedagogical quality (which are not always adequately addressed), as well as issues regarding the relevance of academic training and the financial sustainability of higher education institutions, have continued to emerge as strategic requirements for a consistent higher education policy.

In an archipelago with limited natural resources, human capital (in its best sense) must inevitably be recognized as the primary asset for the country's sustainable and multidimensional development. This necessarily implies that higher education institutions (HEIs) must guarantee students a high-quality education that meets international standards, without neglecting the demands of knowledge

production, training, and the transformation of the economic and social fabric, while strategically taking into account national needs and specificities.

This conference is therefore justified insofar as it reflects the need to analyze higher education in Cape Verde not as an isolated system, but as an integral part of the global knowledge network with which it interacts, within a broad epistemic dialogue capable of contributing to cultural exchange and the development of science as part of the world's heritage in the service of the progress of peoples.

Phenomena such as globalization and the digital world, alongside advances in local academic training and scientific production, based on hybrid models, present opportunities for interuniversity cooperation and academic mobility that can facilitate the design and implementation of joint projects aligned with the need to transform the living conditions of African peoples in general and those of the CPLP in particular.

It is essential to discuss how universities, in diverse contexts, can transform their geographical distance into proximity, maximizing digital tools to create scientific networks for cooperative work in the mutual interest.

In this sense, this conference also serves as a forum for dialogue to find answers to a central question: How can a higher education system even on a small scale be both deeply rooted in local needs and rigorously international in its role of cultural and scientific production and dissemination?

### **3. CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES**

In addition to the general aspects and objectives already outlined above, this International Conference will focus, more specifically, on the following specific objectives:

- To facilitate comparative analyses of different higher education systems;
- To examine the current state of higher education in Cape Verde, particularly in light of standard national and international quality indicators;
- To discuss public policies aimed at promoting access to and enrollment in higher education, questioning the effectiveness of the principles of

inclusion and merit in a country still heavily marked by poverty and regional disparities;

- Identify models for financing higher education and scientific research that are adapted to the realities of small-scale economies in light of the dynamics of international contexts;
- Discuss curricular models and pedagogical approaches in light of contemporary demands, particularly in the fields of technological innovation, the digital world, and artificial intelligence;
- Promote academic cooperation by creating robust research networks among universities in Cape Verde, the CPLP, and other countries;
- Foster the mobilization of the diaspora's potential in the development of higher education and collaboration in scientific research in Cape Verde;
- Discuss the importance of scientific research in peripheral and semi-peripheral countries within the global system;
- • Analyze mechanisms that promote the mobility of faculty and students within training and research networks and projects that do not prioritize only the Global North;
- Explore partnerships between Cape Verdean universities and foreign universities in the fields of climate action, energy transition, and sustainable development, as well as in other areas of knowledge;
- Discuss strategies for improving the quality and regulation of higher education, taking into account the specific characteristics and strategies of small island states and countries of the Global South;
- Examine the limits and possibilities of academic cooperation from the perspective of the epistemic decolonization of the curriculum in higher education;
- To critically reflect on the limits and possibilities of academic cooperation from the perspective of the epistemic decolonisation of higher education curricula.

## **4. CONFERENCE ORGANISATION**

The International Conference includes Plenary Sessions (opening, keynote speeches, and closing) and Panels (presentations accepted for the respective thematic areas).

### **4.1. Thematic Areas**

Theme 1 - Curriculum, technologies, AI, and pedagogy in higher education;

Theme 2 - Access, funding, and sustainability of higher education;

Theme 3 - Regulation, assessment, and quality in higher education;

Theme 4 - Internationalization, the geopolitics of knowledge, and the future of global higher education;

Theme 5 - Contributions of the scientific diaspora to the development of Cape Verdean higher education;

Theme 6 - Academic freedom, interdisciplinarity, and emancipation;

Theme 7 - Cultures, identities, knowledge, and post-memory;

➤ **Format:** hybrid (online and in-person)

- **Call for Abstracts and Papers:** September 15, 2024, through November 31, 2024.
- **Deadline for submitting abstracts, with or without the full text of the papers:** December 15, 2024.

## **5. PARTICIPANTS**

Subject to terms to be defined by the Organizing Committee, and without prejudice to the rules for submitting applications, the International Conference is primarily intended for:

### **5.1. Academics:**

- University lecturers and researchers;

- Master's and doctoral students;
- University leaders, administrators, and managers;
- International partners and academic networks;
- Accreditation agencies and regulatory bodies.

## **5.2. Guests:**

- Government officials, local government representatives, public sector leaders, and policymakers responsible for higher education policies;
- Business leaders and representatives of civil society organisations.

## **6. EXPECTED RESULTS**

- i. Cape Verde Declaration, a concise public document summarizing the main conclusions;
- ii. Proceedings of the International Conference, containing the lectures and papers presented and approved for publication.

Mindelo, June 30, 2026

The Chair of the Organizing Committee,

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Professor Elisa Lopes da Cruz Ferreira da Silva, Ph.D.