



The Fifth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference, 17-21 October, 2016, Century City Conference Center, Cape Town, South Africa

Conference Briefing Note

11 July, 2016

Higher Education has been highlighted as a critical component of implementing the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024), and the African Union Agenda 2063. The RUFORUM African Higher Agricultural Education Weeks and RUFORUM Biennial Conferences, conceptually, focus on providing a platform for African Universities and other higher education stakeholders, including graduate students, to discuss and tackle ‘frontier’ issues that are critical in transforming African Universities towards enhanced relevance for development in Africa, particularly through postgraduate training. The Conferences showcase RUFORUM students’ and other cutting edge university-led research in Africa

The Fifth African Higher Agricultural Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference will be held 17-21 October 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa along the theme “Linking Agricultural Universities with Civil Society, Private Sector, Governments and other Stakeholders in support of Agricultural Development in Africa”. The Conference is co-organized with the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), Centre for Coordinating Agricultural Research in Southern Africa (CCARDESA), and six RUFORUM member universities in South Africa namely Stellenbosch University, University of Free State, University of Fort Hare, University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Pretoria and University of Venda. Framed in a similar fashion to previous Conferences, this Conference will build on key opportunities and events outlined below to provide a platform to enable universities to make use of capacities of various stakeholder organizations and institutions to strengthen higher education in Africa. In particular, the issues related to strengthening linkages with the private sector in its various forms will be tackled.

1. The 2014 Fourth RUFORUM Biennial Conference celebrated 10 years of RUFORUM existence, and confirmed that there was great benefit for universities to collaborate, and to put in place a platform for catalyzing close engagement of African Universities in Africa’s development agenda. The meeting recognized that RUFORUM had achieved the vision of the 10 founding vice Chancellors and had grown into a dynamic regional platform that fosters collaboration, coordination and learning among the member Universities and other actors in Agricultural and Higher Education Sectors;
2. At the same Biennial Conference (2014), RUFORUM signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the African Union Commission to support the implementation of the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024) and more specifically for coordinating implementation of Priority One of STISA 2024 on ‘Eradication of Hunger and Achieving Food Security’. The MoU with the African Union signaled the intention by RUFORUM to increase its geographical coverage to the entire African Continent and strengthened its collaboration and partnership with the African Union. RUFORUM has since put in place an implementation strategy and framework for STISA 2024 Priority One and relevant reporting tools;

Page 1 of 4

CO-ORGANISERS:





3. The First African Higher Education Summit was held in Dakar, Senegal 8-10 March, 2015 and called for, among others, African Union Heads of State and Government to identify from among themselves, a committee of 10 champions for strengthening education, science and technology in Africa. The Committee of ten 'Champions' was established during the 2015 July Heads of State and Government summit in South Africa. RUFORUM Vice Chancellors played an important role in this process, having discussed extensively higher education issues with Her Excellency, the Chair of the African Union Commission, who was a keynote speaker at the Fourth Biennial Conference in Maputo, Mozambique. Her Excellency delivered on her promise to strengthen engagement of higher education institutions with policy at the Highest Level. The Committee of Heads of State will provide an important platform for engagement with African Universities and RUFORUM, including to follow through on the outcomes of the Fifth Biennial Conference;
4. The African Union declared 2016, the African Year of Human Rights. Education was clearly highlighted as a 'human right'. Higher Education in particular was recognized as important for strengthening the entire education sector, and improving the quality of teachers at various levels;
5. RUFORUM leadership approved the RUFORUM Business Plan 2015-2020, which is providing guidance and focus to RUFORUM Strategic operations to 2020. The Plan positions RUFORUM in relation to other regional and sub-regional partners from the African scientific community as well as university based networks and international partners. A key approach will be on platforms for national and continental integration of Research for Development (R4D) and as a backbone for university interaction while strengthening national university capacity to work with research, business, and development partners to transform ideas into innovations.

While the official Conference will be held from Tuesday 18 to Friday 21 October, Pre-conference events will be organized for RUFORUM organs and other side meetings. Reeta Roy, President of the MasterCard Foundation will deliver a key note address on Sunday 16 October at an evening function hosted by the National Research Foundation of South Africa, together with RUFORUM. The RUFORUM Board of Trustees, the Committee of Principals and Deans; the Technical Committee, the International Advisory Panel and the RUFORUM Annual General Meeting will hold their statutory meetings. A Vice Chancellors Forum on leadership and management and two trainings for University Principals and Deans on curriculum development (organized with Harvard University in the United States) and on Gender in collaboration with African Women in Agricultural Research and Development (AWARD) will be organized to enhance capacities of the network to perform efficiently. The Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations will hold its annual meeting on Monday 17th October, 2016. Other pre-conference events will involve graduate students: the Social Media Training for Graduate Students; The Stellenbosch University – RUFORUM Graduate Event; Graduate Students Skills Enhancement Meeting; and project specific student meetings (USAID Feed the Future iAGRI Project, Carnegie Foundation of New York Project and the EU-ACP funded ADECEA project). RUFORUM Graduates and beneficiaries will consider how to support current and future students and launch the RUFORUM Alumni Association.

CO-ORGANISERS:





Day 1 (18 October) Morning: RUFORUM Business meeting

The RUFORUM Annual General Meeting (AGM) is the highest governing organ of RUFORUM. The AGM will be held on the morning of 18th October, 2016, organized in conjunction with the Agricultural Research Council and the University of Venda. The key note address at the AGM will be delivered by the South African Minister of Agriculture Mr. Senzeni Zokwana. The AGM will receive the network report for the just concluded year and confirm work plan for 2016/17. Presentations on key contemporary issues for the RUFORUM network will be presented by partners: the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) (to be presented by NEPAD Coordinating Agency) and the Africa Higher Education Capacity Indicators (by IFPRI/ASTI). The AGM will admit new member universities.

Day 1 (18 October) Afternoon: Official Conference Opening

The Conference will open with a broad focus on identifying key challenges toward ensuring inclusive growth in Africa and more specifically expert perspective on the role of African universities. The Opening Ceremony will be officiated by two distinguished women Scientists: Naledi Pandor, Minister of Science and Technology, South Africa will offer opening remarks, following by Official opening address by Her Excellency Mrs. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of the Republic of Mauritius and Guest of Honor. Solidarity statements will be received from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Common Market for Eastern and Central Africa (COMESA). The Official opening will set the stage for the Conference and highlighting how the Conference aims to achieve its overall objectives of a) Identifying appropriate models and approaches to strengthen engagement between the private sector, policy and Higher Education Institutions; b) Linking graduate research and training to potential employers for a better understanding of the context they will work in; c) Strengthening the use of science, technology and innovation for agricultural led economic growth and development in Africa; and d) Developing strategies for increasing government and National Agricultural Research Institutes (NARIs) support to Higher Agricultural Education (HAE) in Africa.

Day 2 (19 October) Linking Universities with the Private Sector for Agribusiness Innovations

Following an overview of the Conference Program by RUFORUM Secretariat, a key note presentation will be delivered on 'New Directions in Development and Assistance Partnerships' by Dr. Jon Lomoy, Director General, NORAD. The discussions will highlight the global trends and implications for development partner funding for higher education and research in Africa and the role of African governments and other stakeholders, particularly the private sector in driving research agenda in Africa. Subsequently, a discussion will ensue to improve awareness on the role of the private sector with regards to Knowledge Generation and use for Development. A second panel will discuss Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Africa to profile examples of winning innovations that highlight the need for increasing strategies to respond to the overwhelming demand for higher education in Africa and converse reduction in employment opportunities within the public sector in Africa. The Panel will involve 10 young entrepreneur' finalists who will present their innovations to the Plenary. A young and upcoming South Africa farmer will provide concluding remarks for the Session. Parallel sessions and side events will be held in the afternoon. A Side event to discuss Universities-CGIAR, REC, SRO, and NARI Partnerships; and other thematic sessions will be held. RUFORUM together with the World Bank and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will convene a meeting of selected development partners to discuss higher education. Evening sessions will be held including a

CO-ORGANISERS:





RUFORUM alumni association meeting to engage alumni to support RUFORUM academic and networking agenda.

Day 3 (20 October) Strengthening University Engagement for Community Transformation

Strengthening the contribution of universities to community advancement was clearly highlighted by RUFORUM Board members and stakeholders within the recently approved Strategic Business Plan for RUFORUM 2015-2020. Tools such as ICT have been highlighted for their potential role in enhancing effectiveness of technology use and effectiveness at scale. A keynote presentation on 'Digital Agriculture and reaching smallholder farmers; will be delivered by Dr. David Bergvinson, Director General, International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT). The presentation will provide background for further discussion and a Panel on linking universities to communities. A diverse panel will highlight experiences on university outreach from various perspectives including the EARTH experience, farmer NGO and alumni perspectives, and illustration from the Songhai Center in Benin. Parallel sessions will follow for the rest of the day that will include META learning on Higher Education, Strengthening University-Community engagement and innovation platforms and strengthening gender mainstreaming to enhance agricultural productivity.

Day 4 (21 October) Building a Quality Higher Education System in Africa: Game Changers

The last day will tie together strands from previous days' discussions on private sector engagement, youth innovation, university community engagement for impact to guide strategies for enhancing the quality of higher education in Africa and how to effectively engage policy in proposed actions. Professor Calestous Juma of Harvard Kennedy School in the USA will provide his 'Reflections on Africa's Development Trajectory: Implications for Higher Education in Africa'. The reflections will be followed by response from the current Director of the African Academy of Sciences (AAS) Dr. Berhanu Abegaz. The Panel Discussion will bring together key policy makers (African Ministers) and experts from across the Continent to discuss 'Higher Education Game Changers' in Africa and what reforms are needed. There after there will be a number of parallel sessions and a Roundtable discussion involving Ministers of Education, Science and Technology from eight African countries. The Round table will be hosted by the South African Minister for Higher Education, Dr. Blade Nzimande.

The Closing Session will share key outcomes of the Conference in the form of a Conference Communiqué. The Conference will also recognize exemplary individuals during the Closing Ceremony. Key policy makers will make statements prior to the Conference Closing Address. The Chair of the African Union Commission, Her Excellency Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma will give the closing address. The Conference Gala Dinner will take place in the evening of Day 4.

CO-ORGANISERS:

