



The Fifth RUFORUM Biennial Conference and African Higher Education Week

17-21 October, 2015, Century City Conference Center, Cape Town, South Africa

SUMMARY REPORT

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) Biennial and Fifth Africa Higher Education Week Conference was held 17- 21 October, 2016 at the Century City Conference Center in Cape Town, South Africa. The RUFORUM African Higher 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 post-graduate students’ and other cutting edge university-led research including research to impact the lives on smallholder farmers in Africa.
- 1.2 The objective of this year’s Conference was to discuss how to strengthen higher agricultural education in Africa with emphasis on identifying and enhancing strategies to leverage resources and capacities of key stakeholders’ institutions including the private sector, governments, and civil society organizations to transform knowledge into innovations and drive economic growth.
- 1.3 In line with the Objective, the overall theme of the Conference was “Linking Agricultural Universities with Civil Society, the Private Sector, Governments and other Stakeholders in support of Agricultural Development in Africa”.
- 1.4 The Conference was co-hosted by RUFORUM, the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) of South Africa and the six RUFORUM member universities in South Africa¹ with support from national, regional and international partners.

¹ Stellenbosch, Free State, Fort Hare, KwaZulu-Natal, Pretoria and Venda Universities.

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2.0 CONFERENCE DELIVERY AND PARTICIPATION

- 2.1 The Conference was organized with a mix of keynote presentation, plenary presentations and discussions, plenary panel discussions, side events, pre-conference events, RUFORUM Governance organ meetings², Meeting of technical experts, and a Ministerial Meeting over the period from 14-21 October, 2016. A number of documentaries highlighting the impact of higher education on smallholder farmer agriculture were screened. These can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbbSyBnMYksU1npL8w-IoLQ>.
- 2.2 The Ministerial Round Table meeting was attended by representatives of the governments of Benin, Egypt, Kenya, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan, South Africa and Uganda and was preceded by a meeting of technical experts from respective Governments. The Uganda State Minister for Higher Education, Hon. Dr. John Chrysostom Musingo and Malawian Minister for Education, Science and Technology, Hon Professor Emmanuel Fabiano highlighted the importance of strengthening higher education in Africa.
- 2.3 Ms Rita Roy, President of The MasterCard Foundation addressed the Conference Participants in a keynote delivered on Sunday 16th October. In her speech, she highlighted the important role of education in supporting development, and transformation of education on the continent to produce graduates who will harness agribusiness opportunities and create wealth. She also informed participants of the new multi-million partnership with RUFORUM along these objectives.
- 2.4 A statement was delivered by the Dr Molapo Qhobela, Chief Executive Officer of the National Research Foundation (NRF) highlighting the importance of links between South Africa and the rest of Africa to support achievement of science-related African Union goals and targets, but also for national aspirations. The NRF co-hosted various events during the Conference ;
- 2.5 The Chief Executive Officer of the Agricultural Research Council, Dr. Shadrack Moephuli in his Statement re-emphasized the need for stronger links between universities and research institutions in Africa. The ARC was a principal co-host of the Conference including participation in the Local Organising Committee and support to various events during the Conference;
- 2.6 The meeting was officially opened by HE Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, Chairperson of the African Union (AU) Commission on Tuesday 18th October, 2016. The Conference Keynote

² Several pre-conference events were held from 14-16 October including the 15th RUFORUM Board Meeting, the 12th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting, the meeting of African Principals and Deans, trainings on Gender and Leadership among others.

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address was delivered on Wednesday 19th October by HE Mrs. Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, President of the Republic of Mauritius.

- 2.7 The Conference was attended by over 850 participants from 73 countries including two Ministers responsible for higher education, science and technology; 65 Vice Chancellors; 120 Principals and Deans and over 250 Masters and PhD students. Other stakeholders including the private sector, farmers, research, science and technology institutions, civil society and other non-governmental organizations and development partners were represented.
- 2.8 During the opening Ceremony, the meeting hosted the Global Confederation of Higher Education Institutions' (GCHERA) World Agriculture Prize Award (WAP) that was awarded to Prof. Lorne Babiuk, a world-renowned virologist from the University of Alberta in Canada, who is highly acclaimed for his international leadership in vaccine development and research in veterinary infectious disease control, particularly zoonotic diseases.
- 2.9 The meeting received leading papers to guide Conference deliberations on each day. Prof Johan van Zyl, Extraordinary Professor, AgriScience, Stellenbosch University delivered a keynote paper on Tuesday 18th at the Opening Ceremony, and stressed linking university research and development sector to private sector. On Wednesday, Dr. Jon Lomey, the Director General of NORAD, highlighted the importance of new trends in development assistance to Africa requiring greater engagement of the private sector. Dr. Patrick Okori, delivered keynote on Thursday 20th October on behalf of Dr. David Bergvinson, Director General of ICRISAT, on strengthening the use of ICT tools for delivering impact of research technology at the small-hold farmer level. On Friday 21st October, Dr. Berhanu Abegaz provided keynote on the status of science and technology in Africa and how to enhance its use for development.

3.0 KEY ISSUES: HIGHER EDUCATION AND AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 Africa's population recently surpassed the 1 billion mark, and is estimated that it will more than double by the year 2050. Its population accounts for 15% of the world's population and is characterized by a relatively young demographic (40% under the age of 15), with its under-18 population set to increase by over two thirds to reach almost 1 billion;
- 3.2 Higher Education plays a critical role in driving innovations and economic development. In an increasingly globalized, Africa must leverage technology to enhance competitiveness to enhance growth. However, Africa gross enrollment is only 6% access compared to 32% world average and over 40% in developed countries and urgent action is required;
- 3.3 The expansion of university education in all sub-regions of the African continent is a welcome trend, recognizing the low gross enrollment rate in Africa. However, increased massification of Universities in Africa needs to be followed by a corresponding increase in required funding, infrastructure and staffing.

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- 3.4 The inadequate funding for post graduate training needs to be resolved to ensure that the required increased research output and knowledge can be harnessed to drive development
- 3.5 Investing in capacity building on youth of all gender is a primary priority as a matter of course for national, regional and global development interventions.
- 3.6 There is need for flexible and adaptable universities that will produce critical thinkers and change agents needed to meet demands of the rapidly changing world
- 3.7 The meeting appreciate the RUFORUM Vice Chancellors commitment to train 325 PhD students through the RUFORUM Graduate Teaching Assistantship Program as part of beefing up PhD qualified academic staff and promoting academic mobility in Africa;
- 3.8 That the RUFORUM Community Action Research approach has resulted in establishment of multi-disciplinary collaborative research teams and provided an effective mechanism for strengthening university-community engagement to address smallholder farming needs and linking with agribusinesses and this needs to be scaled out across the entire RUFORUM network and across Africa.
- 3.9 Recognised that RUFORUM has increased the pool of women graduates in Agricultural sciences and facilitated the retention of those trained within the continent who are contributing to technology development and deployment.
- 3.10 The dedicated effort by national, regional and global leadership to create enabling environment for socio-economic development. The Continental frameworks include, among others, Agenda 2063 – The Africa We Want: A Shared Strategic Framework for Inclusive Growth and Sustainable Development and A Global Strategy to Optimize the Use of Africa’s Resources for the Benefit of all Africans, the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP), the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa (S3A), the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA – 2024) and regional economic integration and investment developments. These frameworks are linked to the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

4.0 MEETING RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 RUFORUM be supported to scale-out its activities across the continent, and to innovate proactive curricular reforms and delivery taking into account the rapidly changing global academic landscape in demand and supply;
- 4.2 Universities should form alliances with non-public and nongovernmental agencies (NPNGs) involving stakeholders such as entrepreneurs, business community and farmers as a way of working together toward a common goal of transforming institutions and quality and a way of life
- 4.3 University position themselves to be relevant as a trusted player and also position themselves to remain viable and sustainable

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- 4.4 Universities to strengthen private sector links/partnerships/collaborations as enablers for transforming African higher education quality and relevance with a view to uplifting agribusiness institutions and lives of peoples of Africa
- 4.5 Called upon African Private Sector and High Net Worth Persons to invest in Higher Education
- 4.6 **Further RECOMMEND** to the 10 African Heads of State and Government championing Education, Science and Technology constituted by the African Union in July 2015 that the following be considered and included in a Declaration to be made by the African Heads of State and Government during the AU January-February 2017 Summit:
- 4.7 A Core Planning Committee be formed by the African Union Commission to lead the preparation of the planned meeting in Malawi of the 10 Heads of State and Government championing Education, Science and Technology;
 - 4.2.1 Provide technical support to the meetings of the 10 Heads of State and Government championing education, science and technology including the first meeting to be held in Malawi;
 - 4.2.2 The planned meeting of Heads of State, private sector and academia, planned for March, 2017 in Mauritius;
 - 4.2.3 The Core Planning Committee be constituted by the African Union Commission to include Malawi, Mauritius, Egypt, Kenya, Senegal, South Africa, the Association of African Universities, FANRPAN and RUFORUM; and,
 - 4.2.4 The African Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank be approached to participate and support the meeting arrangements and to support higher education initiatives in Africa.
- 4.8 Called for a Marshall Plan to escalate postgraduate training and staffing in African universities. The meeting called on African Heads of State and Government to commission RUFORUM to work with member States and Governments, especially Benin, Egypt, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Senegal, Sudan and Uganda towards an initiative for escalating postgraduate and postdoctoral training in Africa in alignment with AU educational frameworks;
- 4.9 African Governments and Development partners increase long-term funding to the higher education sector, and particularly for postgraduate and postdoctoral training to ensure that there is enhanced use of knowledge to support growth in Africa and the AU Agenda 2063;
- 4.10 The private sector and high net worth individuals to enhance investments within the higher education sector and particularly for postgraduate training;
- 4.11 Member States to:

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- 4.6.1 raise their domestic investment in support of the agricultural sector focusing on capacity building for Higher Agricultural Education, including training and research to generate knowledge to leverage R&D for supporting Africa's development;
- 4.6.2 Improve equitable access to higher Education across socio-economic quintiles and across gender;
- 4.6.3 Strengthen use of ICTs to improve the decentralization of teaching and learning, enhance access to the wider public, and also reduce the costs of education in Africa;
- 4.6.4 Improve the relevance, quality, governance and community impact of higher education institutions, including putting in place relevant frameworks.
- 4.12 Member states further commit to:
 - 4.7.1 establish an 'African university ranking system' that recognizes the specific need for Higher Education in Agriculture and other fields, that would encourage universities to address those needs;
 - 4.7.2 establish a continental 'accreditation standards and credit transfer system' to allow students and staff to switch between universities and widen their exposure which will improve academic mobility;
 - 4.7.3 Develop an 'academic mobility scheme' and strengthen Centres of Excellence to enhance mobility, regional level training and enhance economies of scope and scale.
- 4.13 African Union Commission to lead the process and put in place mechanisms to harmonise initiatives in support for higher education in Africa. In addition, the African Union Commission to improve the movement of staff and students to various African institutions, across the continent. Mobility can be enhanced by providing an enabling environment, as well as reducing challenges to inter-country mobility;

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