



African Higher Education Week & RUFORUM Biennial Conference
Side Event

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Session Name: Ministerial Roundtable Meeting on Strengthening Regional Synergies to Build Africa's Higher Education System

Date: Tuesday 23 October, 2018

Time: 08:30 – 13:00

Room: Room xx,

Venue: Nairobi, Kenya

Background

Higher Education, science, technology and innovation will be critical to achieving the African Union Agenda 2063. For almost all African countries, population growth and demographic changes will exacerbate current challenges. Africa's population is expected to account for one half of all people on the globe by 2050, and most of these will be young people. Feeding the expected 2.5 billion people in Africa with adequate and nutritious food will require significant investment in priority sectors, underpinned by greater use of science, technology and innovation (STI). STI is today, more than ever, recognised as central to Africa's competitiveness in a globalised world that relies heavily on cross border value chains. The recent adoption of the African continental free trade area by the African Union Heads of State provides opportunities for countries to enhance economic growth. However, a country cannot have a strong STI sector without a quality higher education system that provides the relevant human resources, research culture and knowledge based relevant innovation.

Despite the growth in the higher education sector in Africa over the last few decades several challenges remain:

1. Need to expand access. Access to higher education remains a challenge for many students due to the high demand from a broadened primary and secondary education sectors and gross enrolment remains at less than 10% compared to a global average of 32%;
2. Improving relevant knowledge generation Africa research output, despite increases, remains much lower than for other parts of the globe, at less than 3% of global output compared to 17%

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of the global populations. Africa must find means to enhance its research output and make this relevant to national development;

3. Need for skills. Graduates unemployment is on the increase as the formal sector fails to keep up with growth in supply. Graduates must find other employment opportunities, particularly in agriculture and other merging opportunities, and universities must provide for the relevant skills, attitudes and knowledge for this;
4. Building capacity for capacity building. Low number of PhD qualified staff are constraining teaching, research and extension capacity of universities to more adequately support STI.

Introduction

There is need to urgently support universities and enhance their relevance and contribution to national development processes in Africa (Inter-Academy Council, 2004a,b). Addressing the complexity of African farming systems for example to enable them deliver greater output, efficiency and profitability through greater innovation requires, among other things, world-class research. Strengthening higher education, as an underpinning for science, technology and innovation, is required to achieve national development plans and continental aspirations encapsulated in the AU Agenda 2063. Bloom *et al.* (2006) highlight that “expanding tertiary education may promote faster technological catch-up and improve a country’s ability to maximize its economic output”. South- south cooperation within Africa will be an important mechanism to enhance progress to achieving needed STI capacity and its implementation. Partnerships should include partnerships between universities and industries to enhance the relevance of graduates to the private sector, but also to the agricultural and other priority sectors.

Regional partnerships can support greater progress in pursuit of key strategies, including better usage of existing resources such as PhD level staff capacity, existing infrastructure, research equipment, and sharing of lessons among others. The World Bank (2006) highlights that through regional partnerships including through networks etc, education systems can benefit from lessons, experiences, and innovations at the international level (Saint, 2007). Lesson sharing should recognise that specific policies and other innovations that are being used in one country, such as in Africa- may not necessary be applied successfully in another African country (McGrath and Badroodien, 2006). These and other transformation processes require strong cross-country policy support and investment by African governments to ensure ownership and sustainability but also that the agenda is well suited to the specific contexts of stakeholders.

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The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture¹ (RUFORUM) provides an example of a cross country university network that is working to catalyse university contribution to national innovation in support of agriculture through greater use of science, technology and innovation. RUFORUM's work and that of other higher education networks and associations such as the Association of African Universities (AAU) provide important lessons from their members on key successes for which greater dialogue and focus can yield progress.

Rationale for the meeting

In line with this, RUFORUM with support of national, regional, continental and international partners hosted a Ministerial Round Table at the Fifth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference at the Century City Conference Centre, 20 & 21 October, 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa. The 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 meeting aimed to i) discuss and deliberate on key messages from previous relevant meetings to highlight how Africa can respond to key challenges for improving higher education in Africa, such as, among others, the Lilongwe Ministerial Conference in October, 2015; the side event on 'Strengthening higher education to support implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals' organized by His Excellency, Prof. Arthur Peter Mutharika, President of Republic of Malawi at the 70th United Nations General Assembly, 2015; the Khartoum meeting of Principals and Deans; and the First Higher Education Summit held in Dakar, Senegal in 2015; ii) agree on key issues and priorities for strengthening Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation that require high level policy commitment by African Ministers and Heads of State and Government. There is need to review and update on progress made by RUFORUM and other partners in implementing the decisions of the Cape Town meeting.

Objective of the Roundtable Meeting

This Round-table meeting of African Ministers of Agriculture, Education, Science and Technology of selected African Countries will be organised to review the implementation of the commitments made by countries at the Cape Town Ministerial meeting of October 2016. Key objectives will be to:

1. Provide a platform for countries to dialogue on the needed transformation of national and regional higher education systems in Africa to support STI growth and national economic development;
2. Dialogue on key issues and gaps in regional science, technology and innovation in Africa particularly to review developments since the Ministerial meeting in Cape Town, South Africa.

¹ RUFORUM is a network of 85 agricultural African universities across 36 countries that aim to enhance the contribution of African universities to development. RUFORUM is a specialized technical agency of the African Union with mandate to support implementation of the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa and particularly Priority Area 1.

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These will include investments made in STI since the last meeting including the World Bank financed SHAEA program and the proposed regional approach to the Islamic Development Bank;

3. Discuss regional capacity building partnerships in higher education especially for selected specialised agencies including the African Capacity Building Foundation and RUFORUM; and,
4. Discuss potential implementation strategies at the sub-regional level with Regional Economic Communities to scale successful pilots.

Format of the session and roles of participants

A round table dialogue with Ministers will be held on 23 October, 2018 at the side-lines of the RUFORUM Biennial Conference and the Sixth African Higher Education Week Conference in Nairobi, Kenya. About 15 ministers from Ministries responsible for agriculture, higher education, Science and Technology from selected African countries will be invited to the meeting. The meeting will be hosted by HE Ambassador (Dr.) Amina Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary for Education of the Government of Kenya. The meeting will also be attended by key partners such as the African Capacity Building Foundation. Also present will be technical persons from the respective host countries to support the policy makers. The draft meeting agenda is provided in Annex 1. An Expert Moderator (Dr Aldo Strobel, Director Strategic Partnership, National Research Foundation, South Africa) will facilitate the dialogue.

Expected session Output: (a) key gap areas and recommendations for needed transformation of higher education systems in Africa; (b) Charter for RUFORUM endorsed; (c) endorsement of areas of focus for the request to partners including the Islamic Development Bank; (d) Implementation arrangements with selected Regional Economic Communities (RECs) discussed.

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Session Agenda

Time	Activity	Responsible person
08:30-08:45	Refreshments	RUFORUM
08:45-09:00	Arrival of Guests/ Participants	RUFORUM/ David Ekepu
09:00-09:05	Remarks by RUFORUM	Prof. Adipala Ekwamu, Executive Secretary, RUFORUM
09:05-09:15	Welcome Remarks by the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kenya	HE Ambassador Dr. Amina Mohamed,
09:15-09:40	Update on implementation of the Cape Town Ministerial Meeting recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SHAEA Project • Islamic Development Bank • Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa • Committee of 10 Heads of State • RUFORUM Charter 	Dr. Moses Osiru, Deputy Executive Secretary, RUFORUM
09:40-10:15	Clarifications	Chair
10:15-10:45	Health Break	RUFORUM
10:45-12:00	Ministerial Statements	Respective Hon. Ministers & country representatives
12:00-12:20	Discussions	Chair
12:20-12:30	Observations from selected Regional Economic Communities	RECs
12:30-12:37	Observation/Statement from African Capacity Building Foundation	Prof. Emmanuel Nnadozie, Executive Secretary, ACBF
12:37-12:44	Observation/Statement from CAMMES (Conseil Africain Et Malgache Pour l'enseignement Supérieur)	Prof. Bertrand Mbatchi – Secretary General, CAMES
12:44-12:50	Statement from African Union Commission	Dr Beatrice Njenga, Director for Education, AUC
12:50-13:00	Closing remarks	HE Ambassador Dr. Amina Mohamed, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Kenya

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13:00	LUNCH	TBA
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