



African Higher Education Week & RUFORUM Biennial Conference
Side Event

Contact person: Prof. Adipala Ekwamu

Email: e.adipala@ruforum.org

Session Name: Ministerial Policy Dialogue¹ with African Vice Chancellors on Enhancing University Contribution and Alignment to National Development Agenda:

Date: Wednesday 24 October, 2018

Time: 14:00 – 17:00

Room: Room xx,

Venue: Nairobi, Kenya

Background

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is a platform of over 85 African Vice Chancellors in all AU Regional Economic Communities (RECs) that was established in 2004 by African Vice Chancellors. It focuses the attention of African Vice Chancellors and their universities on the use of science, technology and innovation on transforming the African agricultural sector to realize its potential and achieve the vision of African leaders, including the African Agenda 2063. RUFORUM has a cooperative agreement with the African Union to implement priority area 1 of the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2024. RUFORUM key objective is to enhance the contribution of universities towards the achievement of national development objectives in Africa. It does this through various approaches, but all underpinned by the need to create 'Vibrant transformative universities that are able to catalyse inclusive agricultural development to feed and create prosperity for Africa'². This vision is encapsulated in RUFORUM's new Vision 2030 strategy that organises RUFORUM's activities in four key flagships that are designed to respond to key challenges and opportunities within the higher education sector in Africa.

Key challenges of the higher education sector are i) the inadequate quality of outputs of the sector, particularly low levels of transferable skills and mismatch with the needs of the private sector and rural farmers; ii) increased demand for university education amidst restricted and inequitable access, yet

¹ "An iterative process connecting the technical to the political, addressing the aspirations of the people, involving multiple stakeholders aiming to change formal or informal policy, strategy and plans informed by evidence to have maximum (public) impact". See <http://www.uhpartnership.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/02/2015-Briefing-Note.pdf>

² For more information, please see the RUFORUM Vision 2030 Strategy available online at www.ruforum.org

CO-ORGANISERS:





Africa remains the continent with the lowest participation rate in higher education; iii) reduced public financing (per student) highlighted by inadequacies in key inputs and infrastructure; and, iv) limited university engagement with communities and business sector in research, development and training, among others. The proportion of students in higher education institutions is still the lowest compared to other continents and present disparity by country, gender, economic status, discipline and ethnical group. Some countries have less than 2% of the population enrolled against a continental average of less than 10%.

The immensity of the challenges requires a massive transformation of the higher education sector, to shift from the history of universities in Africa that were modelled on colonial principles, of which many are now outdated. Universities in Africa have traditionally been structured to remain relatively isolated from the populations they serve. Further, due to the related challenges at the 'lower' levels in the education 'pipeline' including at primary, secondary and other levels, the students that enter universities are often of inadequate quality and require massive effort for universities to build the future workforce to deliver on Agenda 2063. There also needs to be greater opportunities for students to pursue education through formal and informal routes at all levels, with synchronisation of competence-based training efforts across primary, secondary and vocation educational institutions, but also through on-job training such as through the national qualifications framework. Various efforts are going on, but greater pace and momentum is required to meet Agenda 2063 (ACBF, 2017).

The sheer size of the transformation challenge requires the engagement of key stakeholders in the reform processes, particularly university leaders and key policy makers. It also requires greater clarity on the role of higher education institutions in the development process and implications for their structure and design. Previous efforts at reforms have failed largely due to unaligned efforts, but particularly missing one of two key actors- African governments and university leaders but also other key stakeholders such as the private sector, to drive reforms.

Rationale and Objectives of the Policy Dialogue

Recent efforts to engage policy makers at the highest level to strengthen higher education, science and innovation in Africa have led to the endorsement of key strategic documents such as the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy (STISA) 2024, the Continental Strategy for Education in Africa, the Science Agenda for Agriculture in Africa, among others. While these documents provide rationale pathways for driving implementation of the Agenda 2063, there remains a delink between key institutions on the ground, such as universities that are required to implement them. More recently, the creation of the African Union Committee of ten Heads of State to champion education, science and technology presents another opportunity to move this dialogue towards reality. Regional efforts are critical for aligning cross-country efforts to enhance synergies through cross country collaboration and effort. Policy makers are key players to capacity building efforts in the Higher Education sector and it has become increasingly critical to engage policy/ decision-makers. These include policymakers in all

CO-ORGANISERS:





RUFORUM Member countries in the line ministries (including Ministries of Agriculture, Science and Technology and Higher Education/Research) that straddle RUFORUM’s niche. Importantly, there are significant overlaps in key challenges in the sector across the region that makes regional cooperation and dialogue a necessity.

Policy Dialogue

In line with the above, RUFORUM is organising a policy forum for discussion and debate on policy issues that are important to drive the African science, technology and innovation agenda. The Sixth RUFORUM Biennial Conference and African Higher Education Week provides an important opportunity to engage with both groups of policy makers- African Union Commission and the Regional Economic Commissions, Higher Education and Capacity Building Networks/Organisations, Vice Chancellors from over 90 universities across the continent who will be attending the Sixth African Higher Education Week Conference, and selected ministers of agriculture, education, science and technology who will be participating in a ministerial round table on strengthening higher education in Africa. It is against this background that a Policy Round Table will be held on 24th October 2018 at the African Higher Education week and sixth RUFORUM Biennial Conference. The last convening was held in 2014 in Maputo, Mozambique and was attended by the then Chair of the African Union Commission and several Ministers from across the continent and subsequently led to the First Higher Education Summit held in Senegal in 2015 and the formation of the Committee of ten African Heads of State championing Education, Science and Technology development in the continent.

Further with growth of the RUFORUM network from the initial 10 members in 2004 to the current 85 and plans for growth to over 100 members, the RUFORUM Vice Chancellors provide an important platform for higher education policy makers and universities to dialogues on cross country strategies to respond to challenges of the higher education sector in Africa. It is against this background that RUFORUM is organising this roundtable meeting of Ministers of science, technology and agriculture from African countries and African Vice Chancellors to be held at the October 2018 RUFORUM Biennial meeting.

Objectives of the Roundtable Policy Dialogue

To date, university strategies for engagement with policies have remained unimaginative, with focus on preparing journal articles, open days, and developing and disseminating policy briefs. They have often felt that is the role of policy makers to reach out to African universities and guide the role that they play in development discourse. The overall objective of this high level roundtable meeting is to provide a platform for direct dialogue for African Vice Chancellors and Africa ministers responsible for higher education, STI and agriculture to design high level strategies to enhance education, science and innovation for responding to development challenges in the continent. The specific objectives of the meeting will be to:

1. Provide a platform for the African Vice Chancellors and ministers responsible for education,

CO-ORGANISERS:





- STI and agriculture to share key positions and policy messages;
2. Profile and inform African policy makers of key opportunities to strengthen the higher education sector in Africa and make concrete suggestions for consideration;
 3. Enhance communication between policy makers and university Vice Chancellors on key issues; and
 4. Present progress on RUFORUM interventions to strengthen universities and capacity building efforts/contribution at regional level; and c) lobby for support of the RUFORUM agenda and mission.

Format of the Policy dialogues and roles of participants

The Policy-Round Table will be held as a side event at the African Higher education Week and Sixth RUFORUM Biennial Conference which is scheduled to take place 22-26 October, 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya. This particular dialogue session will be held 14-17 hrs on 24th October 2018 (Venue to be communicated). The meeting will be facilitated by Dr. Aldo Stroebel, Executive Director at the National Research Foundation, South Africa. Participants will comprise Vice Chancellors, RUFORUM Board Members, invited Policymakers (including Ministers), representative from the African Union Commission and Regional Economic Commissions, and other key actors including the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa, African Women in Agricultural Development (AWARD) and African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF)

Draft Session Agenda

Time	Activity	Responsible person
13:45-14:00	Arrival of guests	David Ekepu
14:00-14:05	Remarks by RUFORUM Executive Secretary	Prof. Adipala Ekwamu
14:05-14:10	Remarks by Director, Education, Department for Human Resources, Science and Technology, AUC	Dr. Beatrice Njenga, Director Education, HRST, AUC
14:10-14:15	Welcome Remarks by the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kenya	HE Ambassador Dr. Amina Mohamed
14:15-14:25	Building capacity for STI in Africa	Documentary on RUFORUM
14:25-15:30	Mediated discussion between Vice Chancellors, invited actors and African Ministers	Facilitator
15:30-16:30	Observations by African ministers of education, science, and technology	Ministers of EST

CO-ORGANISERS:





16:30-17:00	Closing remarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RUFORUM • Government of Kenya 	RUFORUM, Government of Kenya
17:00	Refreshments	TBA

Expected session Output: i) A Narrative Report of the meeting highlighting key follow up actions will be produced and circulated; ii) A Statement/Declaration of desired changes in Higher Agricultural Education in Africa; and, iii) Linkages with RUFORUM Network and RUFORUM Member Universities with line ministries will be strengthened.

CO-ORGANISERS:

