

**Remarks by Prof Adipala Ekwamu, the Executive Secretary
of RUFORUM on the occasion of Webinar 13 - Global
university partnerships for addressing emerging
development challenges**

Madam Moderator, Dr. Pauline Essah, the Head of Research and Insight at Education Sub Saharan Africa, UK

Prof José Zaglul, President, Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for Agricultural and Life Sciences (GCHERA)

Prof Carolyn Glynn, President for European Alliance on Agricultural knowledge for Development (AGRINATURA).

Mr. Bernie Burrola, Vice President for International Programmes. Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU), USA

Prof R.P. Singh, Executive Secretary, Indian Agricultural Universities Association (IAUA).

Dr. Tang Ying, Deputy Director International Office, China Agricultural University (CAU) and Secretariat of the Belt and Road South-South Cooperation Agricultural League (BRSSCAL), China.

Prof Ki Hee Ryu, Institute of Green Bio Science and Technology, Seoul National University, Korea.

Prof. Etienne Ehouan Ehile, Secretary General for Association of African Universities (AAU).

Prof Coumba Toure Kane, the Rector of University of Sine Saloum El-Hâdj Ibrahima NIASS, representing the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA).

All participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all on behalf of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), a Network of 129 universities in 38 African countries to the 13th in Series of the RUFORUM Webinars.

For those who may not be familiar with RUFORUM, we were founded in 2004 by 10 universities in Eastern and Southern Africa to transform African universities to collaboratively train critical thinkers, innovative and entrepreneurial graduates to address Africa's agricultural challenges. RUFORUM was also founded to mobilise African researchers to generate knowledge, technologies and innovations that are relevant in addressing Africa's agricultural development challenges and reaching out to communities to solve these challenges.

RUFORUM recognizes that African universities cannot achieve this objective alone and need partnerships with universities and other actors within and beyond Africa. Indeed the two documentaries shown earlier as part of this Webinar show the value of partnership in addressing common challenges, increasing access to quality education and infrastructure and for fostering better global understanding. This is what motivated RUFORUM to convene this Webinar. The RUFORUM Network has already benefitted from partnership with the different institutions that many of the panelists and participants represent. We thank them for accepting to work with RUFORUM.

As shown by COVID-19 and Climate Change, no one country or continent can address the challenges that humanity faces alone, highlighting the need for global collective action in sharing of knowledge, technology, infrastructure, human and financial resources for helping each other address challenges.

This need is even more pressing upon universities who are established to be producers of human resources with the highest skills and knowledge to generate solutions to humanities challenges and even much more in agriculture, the sector providing food, employment and livelihood for majority of people.

It is my hope that this Webinar will provide insights for training quality human resources, research, innovation and entrepreneurship capacity development and for addressing the most pressing needs of our time such as climate change and COVID-19 so that we can produce enough quality food while maintaining our planet healthy, productive and habitable.

From RUFORUM perspective, I see the following as some of the critical issues requiring our attention;

- 1) The need to re-engineer Universities to respond to emerging development challenges not only the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, but others such as the need for a green economy, building resilience to shocks, need for new skill sets, amongst others. In other words how do we make Universities transformative and forward looking institutions?
- 2) How do we foster partnership for global learning-harnessing competences and comparative advantages such as for online teaching and designing innovative programmes to catalyse inclusive development and rural transformation
- 3) The world is changing so fast, requiring new skill sets: how do we support universities to deal with this, particularly for the youths, while promoting issues of inclusivity?
- 4) How do we engage globally, learning from each other and ensuring strategic partnerships for engagement of universities?
- 5) From an African perspective, we need to foster intra-African collaboration, and partnership with global partners to enhance quality and access to education in Africa.

As such this webinar provides opportunity for learning and sharing best practices from different parts of the world. As a Network, we look forward to learning from the partner networks and you participants in this webinar.

I also request that we move beyond talking to action, generate real solutions and propose a plan for joint action on how to produce skilled and development-oriented graduates, and research and innovations which will in a sustainable way, address the challenges that face the global world and that promote sustainable inclusive development.

Once more, I welcome all of you to this Webinar and wish everyone an engaging discussion.

Prof Adipala Ekwamu, Executive Secretary of RUFORUM

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