

**Report of the Partners Meeting on Promoting Equal
Opportunity for Youth Employability and
Entrepreneurship in Africa**

30 September-01 October 2019

Serena Hotel, Kampala, Uganda

Background

The African Union Agenda 2063 aspires for Africa to become a major knowledge and innovation force in the global economy. The Agenda's action plan provides for a more integrated and inclusive Africa that uses its natural resources, human capital and institutions to drive technological, social and business innovation for development. It proposes approaches that will ensure rapid and sustainable growth, reduce out-migration, and improve quality of life. Highly-skilled human resources are essential to develop and deploy new technologies to meet the goals and aspirations of the Agenda. This is also envisioned in the United Nations 2030 Agenda on sustainable development, notably: Goal 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" and Goal 10 "Reduce inequality within and among countries". The success of any initiatives to contribute to Africa's response to regional and global agendas will depend on synergy between and among partners and stakeholders operating in the African region.

Recognising the untapped potential of returns to investment in youth entrepreneurship, and the challenges that Africa's tertiary agricultural education sector faces, the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Development in Agriculture (RUFORUM), a network of 119 universities from 38 African countries across the African continent, developed "***the African Universities Agenda for Higher Agricultural Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (AHESTI)***" as a continental "Vision 2030 Strategy" to deepen the involvement of universities in Africa in the national, regional and continental knowledge-driven development agendas. RUFORUM Vision 2030 seeks to harness the resident capacities and innovation of vibrant transformative universities to catalyse sustainable inclusive agricultural development to feed and create prosperity for Africa - with a special focus on developing skilled and entrepreneurial graduates, and the generation and scaling up of knowledge products and innovations with impact.

AHESTI was developed with awareness of Africa's lagging behind in high-level skills, technologies and innovations. It recognises the need to do more, and to do it differently. It is about ensuring that Africa's young population and institutions are empowered to develop new knowledge and innovations for societal and economic transformation. This is most important in agriculture and other primary sectors that provide food, employ a large proportion of the population, and provide large export and foreign exchange earnings for the continent. RUFORUM operates along and across the entire education and science, technology and innovation value chains involving Technical Vocational Education Training (TVET), Higher Education Science and Technology (HEST), and Research and Development (R&D) institutions, all of which play a critical role in developing the right quality of human resources, new knowledge, as well as technologies and innovations required to transform the continent's economy.

The expanded higher education sector has generated many graduates, yet the notion of graduate unemployment and the lack of appropriate skills persist in most African countries. Moreover, with an ever increasing population expected to reach 2 billion by 2050, there is urgent need to explore alternatives to exploit the potential that this energetic labour presents for the development of the continent. At the same time, there is need to harness available opportunities for the benefit of the youth to improve productivity and livelihoods. In the agriculture sector, the need to move beyond farm production to value addition and inclusive service provision across the commodity value chain is paramount. Higher education is a catchment area for the youth who are at the start of their adult life and open to ideas and practices that will be instrumental throughout their lifespan. The expansion of curriculum to incorporate entrepreneurship, financial inclusion and other soft skills is a fundamental attribute to harness this potential. The need to build human resource capacity to reorient academic

instruction to appreciate the changing paradigm for higher agricultural education is a key component for RUFORUM Vision 2030.

The Consultative Forum

Convened by Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development (AOAD) in collaboration with the Arab Bank for Economic Development (BADEA) and RUFORUM, the Consultative Forum was designed to provide a platform for dialogue between the African tertiary education sector (TVET, HEST, R&D) and the global and African development partners to chart a way forward for promoting equal opportunity in youth employability and entrepreneurship in Africa. The Consultative Forum is part of the RUFORUM iterative processes for the design and implementation of initiatives that strengthen higher agricultural education, business incubation, and enterprise creation in Africa.

Participants deliberated within the context of youth as active participants in both higher education and agricultural value chains, acknowledging that several of Africa's youth originate from smallholder farms where technologies would boost production and productivity to create upstream employment for graduates and out-of-school youth. Building on the meeting held in Morocco in March 2019, the meeting was intended to explore how the different partners could advance the discussion and partnership to promote the interface between higher agricultural education and the business prospects in agriculture, applying and utilising STI and benefitting from areas of synergy in the development partners' strategies and opportunities for youth employability and entrepreneurship in Africa.

The overall objective was to facilitate dialogue among Development Partners who are closely involved or have interest in supporting youth, agricultural higher education and research, and entrepreneurship for Africa's rural and economic transformation. It provided a platform for open sharing of experiences, lessons and emerging issues related to promoting equal opportunity in youth employability and entrepreneurship in Africa; and generated proposals on areas of synergy, implementation and coordination mechanisms for equal opportunity in youth employability and entrepreneurship in Africa.

SESSION 1: OPENING REMARKS

Remarks from RUFORUM

The Executive Secretary of RUFORUM, Prof. Adipala Ekwamu thanked BADEA and AOAD for jointly co-hosting the event as a follow up of the meeting held in Marrakesh, Morocco. He specifically highlighted a few of the outcomes from the meeting held in Marrakesh – especially: skilling the youth; building entrepreneurship skills for youth and for the broader community; engagement and participation of women, girls, community and industry (private sector) in HESTI; and greater engagement of RUFORUM and universities in the policy space at all levels of decision making. He noted the vast existence of islands of success across the continent and called for practical mechanisms for lessons learning and scaling up opportunities. He concluded by emphasising the need to seek partnerships for skilling youth and increasing opportunities for entrepreneurship.

Remarks from BADEA

The BADEA representative, on behalf of the Director General, noted that the bank focuses on supporting infrastructural development; agricultural value chains; small and medium enterprises; entrepreneurship development; and, private sector development. He reiterated the recommendation

of the Marrakesh meeting to develop a bankable project that BADEA could mobilise support for in the context of Building Africa's Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity (BASTIC) and, strengthening entrepreneurship and innovation especially among the youth and women. He strongly urged national governments to support and facilitate RUFORUM engagement with development partners, especially those that operate through bilateral and multi-lateral lending instruments, in strengthening Africa's capacity for innovation and entrepreneurship.

Remarks from AOAD

The Director General, AOAD, informed the meeting of the re-alignment of the AOAD 2005 – 2025 Strategy to focus on the key areas of: entrepreneurship development through STI; value chains enhancement; capacity building (skilling youth and women); and, knowledge sharing. He noted the existence of too many people with no science leadership; the under investment in higher education and called for increased investment in AHESTI to strengthen Africa's science capacity, and in particular investment in university education to expand Africa's innovation and capacity.

Remarks from AUC-DREA

The representative of the African Union Commission (AUC) Directorate of Rural Economy and Agriculture (DREA) noted that the AUC considers STI as a pillar for economic growth, and one of the priorities enshrined in the STI Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024). Youth development is a cross-cutting intervention in the policy arena of the AUC and the AUC appreciated the innovative projects developed by RUFORUM in the different universities to enable young people to be more relevant in addressing the key issues facing Africa.

OFFICIAL OPENING

The meeting was officially opened by the State Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development (General Duties) Government of the Republic of Uganda, Hon. Dr. Gabriel Ajedra Aridru (*full speech appended*). He extended appreciation to BADEA and AOAD for conceiving the idea of the meeting and to RUFORUM for accepting to host the meeting in Kampala. He highlighted youth as the future for economic growth and sustainability and requested all partners to increase opportunities for youth and social-economic transformation for the good of the continent. He concluded by requesting several partners support higher education in Africa including;

- Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) to support the building Africa's higher education, science, technology and innovation capacity
- African Development Bank to strengthen staff capacity in African universities and increase the pool of scientists
- World Bank to provide resources for escalating the setting up of the African Centres of Excellence, in particular lifting the freeze put of the Strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa (SHAEA) Project. It is to be noted that this five-year regional initiative that was developed by the World Bank in partnership with African governments and RUFORUM builds on Africa's efforts to stimulate agri-food system transformation in support of the Malabo Declaration and the CAADP by strengthening linkages between selected African universities and regional agricultural sector needs for developing required human resources to accelerate agri-food system transformation in Africa. Uganda, as a beneficiary country would like to see this programme re-activated.

- Mastercard Foundation to continue educating and skilling youth
- African Union Commission and European Union to consider funding RUFORUM to continue supporting research and training in Africa.

SESSION 2: SHARING EXPERIENCES

The key issues presentation by RUFORUM focused on challenges and opportunities for investment in the youth (presentation annexed). The key highlights were that:

- The collaborative skilling events extended to member universities strengthened collaboration and networking amongst actors in the agriculture higher education pipeline.
- University-Community engagement and the introduction of student-led advisory service delivery and enterprise schemes builds capacity of both the next generation of agriculture/science leaders and innovators, farmers and communities resulting into increased productivity and marketing avenues.
- Students' attachments are valuable in enabling smallholder farmers better understand science.
- Results emerging from the RUFORUM Network need to be scaled out to spur transformation across the African Continent.

The presentation was followed by a moderated panel discussion, in which Partners outlined their strategies and the opportunities for synergy and complementarity with RUFORUM. The members represented on the panel were: African Development Bank; OCP Group; Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa; Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development; Trade and Development Bank; Islamic Development Bank; and the Uganda Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation. The key messages were that:

- Research needs to have focus on development rather than the traditional focus on publications. Research for transforming the economy needs to deliver products on the market. To meaningfully engage youth, special consideration is needed to establish who they are and where they are; segregate them since there is a divide between urban youth and the rural youth; identify the real causes of youth unemployment to develop targeted solutions depending on the youth category; and segregate the gender to be targeted. Need to also consider whether youth engagement in agriculture is "a way of life or a choice".
- **OCP Africa** builds public- private sector partnerships with major agricultural sector actors and develops new businesses to encourage youth supported by innovated tools and funding solutions, including digital and data analytics. It has developed partnerships with best-in-class universities including UM6P to empower youth in Morocco and other African countries and an African start-up incubator to support the growth of selected seed stars across the continent. It promotes research programs with international organizations; and, connect with African universities-developed a tool to inform climate smart agriculture decisions-several African universities and research centers are involved
- **BADEA** undertakes scaling up of its initiatives through the Governments. Entrepreneurship linked with agriculture is a key point of focus by BADEA, with several challenges including

access to finance and infrastructure. These need to be addressed to boost entrepreneurship in Africa. The bank has supported youth development through their programs, and would like to dedicate some specific programs including economic empowerment programs, to support women and youth – especially through programs targeting TVETs, agribusiness incubation and financial solutions for the entrepreneurs. RUFORUM needs to identify a country to pilot this programme, and BADEA is prepared to support in the preparation of the feasibility studies and implementation on request from the identified country.

- **AfDB** (African Development Bank) works through governments of member countries. To enable this, each country develops a country strategy paper to guide intervention areas. AfDB recommended that RUFORUM advocates for specific priorities where the countries need to invest more. The bank invests depending on the realities on the ground and is currently guided by the “High Five” priorities. The AfDB mobilized resources through investment and contribution from member countries. The African Education Fund is being developed to support the education for sustainable development thrust of the bank. RUFORUM could consider this as a window for supporting retooling of university staff through the various regional centres of excellence. RUFORUM also needs to envisage how to engage the Diaspora in supporting capacity building. AfDB could collaborate with RUFORUM in this aspect. AfDB funds special programmes in form of grants - RUFORUM could consider developing a regional programme that is linked to the AU agenda, secure recommendation from the AU, and work with member countries to secure funding from the AfDB.
- **AOAD** supports pilots to reinforce productivity of major food security crops and empowerment of rural women through four focus areas including entrepreneurship skills development; capacity building; financial and non-financial services; and start-ups/incubators to address youth employment and engagement with community. AOAD recommended that RUFORUM mainstreams and realigns with the government priorities to enable the governments apply for grants. This will open up a platform for RUFORUM to work closely with the governments. The framework of collaborating with the government needs to be developed.
- **TDB** (Trade and Development Bank) has a mandate to mobilize capital for facilitating entrepreneurship development and trade between member countries. The bank provides medium term capital for entrepreneurship establishment; trade finance to assist investors; and, extend assistance in fostering economic integration of the region. TDB handles youth associated challenges through several strategies including: Young Professional Program where young people below 30 years are offered opportunity to work as interns in the Bank for two years; coaching and mentoring; mainstreaming financial inclusion in operations; and, the TDB academy which serves as a virtual training platform for capacity building.
- **IsDB** (Islamic Development Bank) is anchored on Islamic financing principles and basically deals with governments; research and training institutes; private sector firms; risks that other institutions may incur; and, pre-financing. IsDB has the Islamic solidarity fund for development and, the STI fund for promoting entrepreneurship. The bank also recently launched the Global Muslim Philanthropic Fund for children. The bank has several strategies including the new education policy anchored on 3 pillars - support to building the fundamentals of human education; supporting skills and TVETS; and, advocacy and building new partnerships. The Bank also has a youth strategy as well as a Women empowerment strategy. IsDB programmes include Youth empowerment through microfinancing particularly women and youth to access

start-up capital; and the Reverse Linkage program where every country is offered opportunity to sell a good practice to the outside world, and hence serve as a conduit for inter country transfer of skills and knowledge. In Uganda, IsDB is supporting the Islamic University in Uganda as well as the King Fahad facility that was established as an endowment for the university. IsDB could support other universities in this sphere. Since Uganda already has an existing Research and innovation framework, the Bank can supplement this platform as a potential project for the country. IsDB supports Masters and PhD programmes in top 100 Universities and has 22 collaborating Universities in SSA. It has a window for Muslim communities in non-member countries that could be exploited as opportunity to support retooling of university faculty.

EMERGING ISSUES

African islands of success: How to escalate mechanisms for lesson learning and scaling up opportunities for youth and women entrepreneurship

- RUFORUM has over 300 technologies. These need to be repackaged and start-up capital provided followed by scaling out and patenting. Scaling up has high financial costs and this can only be achieved through greater government ownership.
- RUFORUM could undertake scaling out through selecting a pilot country after preparing a comprehensive ‘Entrepreneurship Development Programme’ concept note. The selected pilot country could then apply to several donors to provide financing (through grants) for preparing a fully-fledged feasibility study for that program. Once the feasibility study has been undertaken, Government will then apply to the Donors requesting to finance the implementation of the proposed program. RUFORUM could work to replicate the program in other countries.
- Youth have a negative attitude towards agriculture. It has to be demonstrated that agriculture is not for “a disadvantaged lower/poor class of citizens” but a paying business opportunity. Simple technologies that can enhance agriculture and value addition are needed.
- Science needs to be grown right from the foundation levels in the education pipeline; Science needs to be cultivated at the early schooling ages. Capacity building for all age groups will create an enabling environment for enhancing improvements in the innovations of the youth.
- Using RUFORUM as the steering organization, successful ideas could be identified and funding opportunities, patenting and marketing outlets sought. There is need to create specific women-targeted interventions, targeted leadership training skills to enable women and youth take part in the development arena and STI stewardship.
- Universities need to engage effectively with the policy space in their countries, to enable the HESTI value chain be looked at systematically to have a marketable products. STEM and TVET programmes have to be mainstreamed in agricultural education and development
- We need to understand and address issues that discourage youth from engaging in Agriculture. Curriculum should focus on skills training and university engagement in the entire value chain, including also deliberate strategies for university/industry partnership in training and research.
- Need to document, package and share experiences of success in youth and women entrepreneurship; conduct a comprehensive mapping of success stories and lessons learnt and

create a platform for knowledge sharing. Funding needs to be sourced from partners to scale up the best practice, in particular targeted financing of youth to support incubation beyond the prototype stage at the universities. This is further possible if youth are organized in groups, and segmented according to clear and distinctive categories that can be specifically targeted with appropriate interventions.

- Governments need to strengthen agricultural credit and insurance; agro-processing; and, agricultural mechanization.

Widening gap for science and innovation leadership: Engaging in the Africa policy space to increase investment in higher education

- RUFORUM agenda should be clearly articulated at major regional and inter-regional bodies including AU-Arab league partnership, with strong advocacy and lobbying to enable government buy-in into the programmes being proposed. Such convenings could serve as platforms for debating the sustainability of the education system, with focus on TVETs; STI/STEM while putting into consideration the fragile States.
- Risk management strategies, management of Intellectual Property, policies that capture issues of innovation with focus on mind-set change, and documenting best practices and packaging them to inform policy practice is critical.

Skilling Africa to utilize locally generated innovation and skills to improve quality of development investments

- Need to partner with other development agencies and convince policy makers of the usefulness of RUFORUM work. We need to convince governments to work with RUFORUM and embed the network activities into national programs. This way, continuity and sustainability will be assured.
- DFID supported a programme in a number of countries for training unemployed STEM graduates, as science teachers in secondary schools – an undertaking that was rather successful in reducing unemployment and providing the much needed teachers especially in rural-based schools. Such pilots need to be collated and replicated.
- Innovations need to be packaged, patented and innovators availed start-up capital for commercialisation. For innovation to reach the beneficiaries, extension/advisory services systems need to be revamped and made to work. The innovations have to be demand driven; skills to be matched to industrial needs
- Partners must engage and further strengthen the human capital development ecosystem.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training for Africa

AfDB made a presentation highlighting the Bank's focus on post-secondary level of education, for linkage to the economic transformation of the continent. It complements the initiatives of the member countries through innovative financing; coding for employment-work with universities, and

partnerships. The continental TVET strategy lays out actions for transforming the continent and we need to consider how to get the strategy to its right place.

The discussion focused on mechanisms of working together to review, assess and analyze policies and strategies; understanding the TVET ecosystem including mapping institutions and systems; analyzing and assessing the linkages and interactions. The TVET is a system built on “instruction” rather than teaching - this may necessitate establishment of instructors’ colleges.

Universities need to understand the needs of the private sector and what they are providing to address the issue of “half-baked” graduates emerging from the universities. The linkage between the training in TVETs and what countries want needs to be clear and aligning. Specificity the different countries needs should be emphasized rather than generalization. The curriculum needs to be revisited and revised into a hands-on agriculture degree - linked to the needs. The regulatory framework for the TVETs needs to be reviewed - there are very many players, some of whom are not really functional. How can RUFORUM influence this?

SOME RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Develop concrete concept notes/proposals based on the areas of interest expressed by the different partners and proactively follow up for possible support. Scaling up of innovations needs strong involvement of Governments to support private equity and investment.
- RUFORUM in partnership with relevant authorities like (Ministries of Science, Technology and Innovation, Africa Regional Intellectual Property Organisation – ARIPO, etc.) should establish the status of IP awareness amongst the member universities and devise mechanisms to assist, especially on matters to do with patenting of novel ideas and inventions coming out of the universities.
- RUFORUM needs to think about the entire education value chain, especially the middle section, in its programming. AfDB is launching a study on TVETs in Africa and RUFORUM needs to engage and point out aspects that need to be considered. Most countries have Country Strategies that often do not consider human capacity development as a key pillar. Where is the RUFORUM voice in this?
- Africa frequently “imports” skills to manage the investments it is making instead of training its own youth. This must change – and RUFORUM is an appropriate platform for driving this agenda. We must guarantee the quality of Africa’s investments by using locally generated ideas; Africa must be helped to look at the opportunities – lest we mess up and escalate the constraints. RUFORUM must have a strong presence and voice on the African policy scene.
- RUFORUM and its members must help Africa to go far and wide in search of knowledge, to have deliberate policies and invest heavily in HESTI, to create centres of excellence in enterprise development and for agricultural transformation as envisioned in SHAEA (Strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa Regional Anchor Universities). In this RUFORUM should reposition and be able to access resources already available in government and other partners, and African Union Commission should engage the World Bank and African governments to actualize and scale out SHAEA.
- RUFORUM to send a summary of the discussion to the relevant authorities, in particular to the Office of the Prime Minister in Uganda, for forwarding to the respective Ministries and agencies to further the emerging recommendations

KEY MESSAGES FROM PARTNERS

Ministry of Education and Sports - Uganda

Uganda has a national strategy on TVET education “Skilling Uganda”. The Ministry is fully in support of RUFORUM, and has been actively supporting RUFORUM, especially regarding the establishment of the Centres of Excellence. The Ministry also supports the focus to strengthen staff capacities in African Universities, efforts to increase the pool of women scientists in Africa, the efforts to establish regional Centres for human capital development and transformation and seeks to partner with other Governments and Partners in these efforts. Partners have to move together and extend support to each other to enable the achievement of shared goals.

Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries - Uganda

The Ministry values the work of RUFORUM. Uganda is in the process of developing its 3rd National Development Plan (NDP III) that is hinged on agro-industrialization and value addition with a strong reliance on science, technology and innovation. Uganda also seeks to participate in the SHAEA initiative, strengthening agricultural value chains, and in establishment of agri-innovation parks.

Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation - Uganda

The Ministry is committed to working with all stakeholders, including RUFORUM and the development partners for the commitments made. The Ministry has interest in strengthening research and also commercializing the research results. The research emerging from the universities should not get lost – it should be used to create income and wealth both for the inventors, innovators and users. This needs supportive infrastructure and business support systems like incubation centers. The Ministry welcomes and will support the continental initiative to Build Africa’s Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity (BASIC), Strengthening Science Innovations and Entrepreneurship (SASTIE) and urged Partners including the African Union Commission to support the four continental initiatives proposed by RUFORUM (Annex 1).

Islamic Development Bank

Human Resource development is a key focus area of IsDB and assured all partners of the commitment to achieve the common destiny of the African continent, assuring RUFORUM of the technical and political buy-in into the RUFORUM Vision 2030 programming by IsDB senior management.

OCP Group, Morocco

OCP and UM6P will support RUFORUM in participating in the Africa-EU business summit being organized in Morocco in November 2019 and the OCP North America convention. OCP is keen to work with RUFORUM to take African agriculture to the next level.

CLOSING BY CHAIRPERSON, RUFORUM FINANCE & ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE - Dr. Mary Shawa

On behalf of the RUFORUM Board, conveyed RUFORUM’s appreciation to the Partners for supporting the meeting and for entrusting RUFORUM with the responsibility for convening the meeting in Uganda. She noted the strong recommendations from the meeting of the need to train leaders at various levels as well as women and youth, and promised that RUFORUM will work with member

universities and Member States Governments to ensure these take precedence in programme formulation.

She thanked the Government of Uganda and Makerere University for hosting RUFORUM Secretariat and the offer to build a home and technology/business incubation centre for the Secretariat. She informed the meeting, she had requested the Minister the previous day to convey to the Cabinet that the RUFORUM family is greatly humbled by the gesture. She assured the partners that innovations that bring money for the ordinary African and society at large will be packaged and RUFORUM will further seek support for the wide spread use and application.

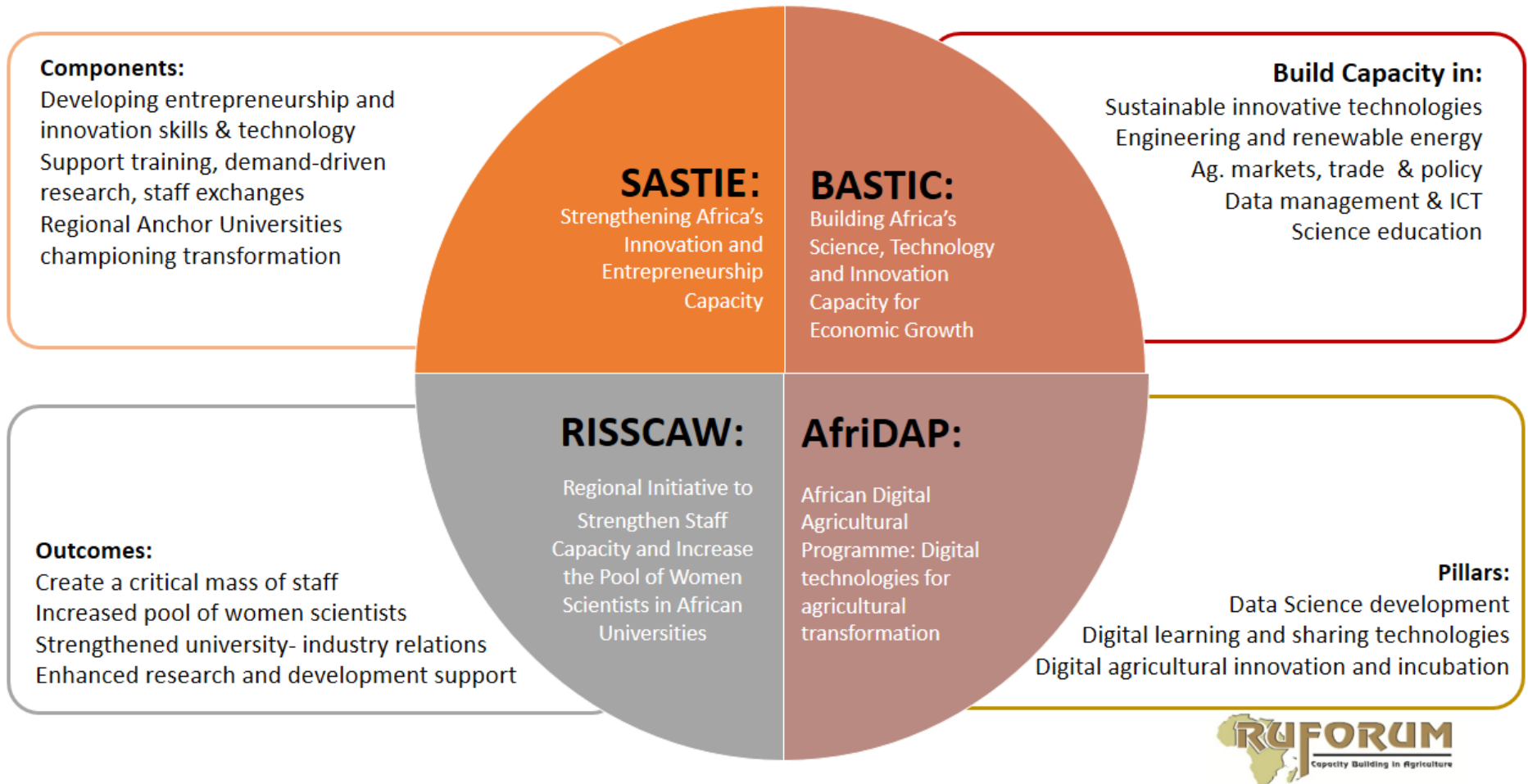
Further she requested for support to RUFORUM from the Ministries in the different African Member States, to talk together rather than as separate entities, and facilitate the endorsement of the RUFORUM Charter and implementation of the actions that were endorsed by the Committee of 10 African Heads of State Championing Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (C10).

She invited the Partners to come to Ghana 5 & 6th December 2019 to engage with African Ministers to map out modalities for putting into action the key recommendations of the two- days' Kampala Partners Consultative Forum.



Annex 1

Looking ahead- Four initiatives for strengthening higher education and STI in Africa



Annex 2

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS-DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS CONSULTATIVE MEETING, 30
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Annex 3



**Speech by the State Minister for Finance, Planning and Economic
Development (General Duties)**

**On the Occasion of the opening ceremony for the development partner
consultation meeting on “*Partnership for promoting equal opportunity in
youth employability and entrepreneurship in Africa*”**

Serena Hotel Kampala

30th September 2019

- Your excellences, Ambassadors present
- The Representative of the African Union
- Partners in development
- Vice Chancellors Present
- My colleagues from Government
- Members of the RUFORUM Board Executive Committee
- RUFORUM Secretariat

Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic Uganda, I welcome you all to the “Pearl of Africa” and this consultative meeting in particular.

Allow me to start by thanking the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA) and the Arab Organisation for Agricultural Development (AOAD) for conceiving the idea of having this meeting and the RUFORUM Network for accepting to host this meeting in Kampala, Uganda.

Allow me also thank all of you for sparing your valuable time to attend this consultative meeting, a valuable event that is focusing on harnessing the valuable resource that we have as a continent - Our youth. Some have dubbed it a demographic dividend. I believe it is Africa’s future economic growth and sustainability.

The Government of the Republic of Uganda hosts the RUFORUM Secretariat at Makerere University, a commitment that was made in 2004 at the establishment of RUFORUM. As the host country we are proud of the achievements that it has made over the past 15 years - which has demonstrated that government and academia can work together for the betterment of the population.

The focus on agriculture is undoubtedly a critical point, not only for Uganda but the African continent as a whole. Statistics shows that 80% of the population is dependent on agriculture. We therefore have to identify all possible means that will support, grow and develop Agriculture. It is a vision under Africa’s Agenda 2063, that Africa should be the food basket of the world. We certainly have the

resources to achieve this 'our youth'. Networks, such as RUFORUM, that bring several actors together are a gem that we need to cherish.

The Government of the Republic of Uganda requests that all the partners present in this meeting to support the cause of increasing opportunities for youth employability and entrepreneurship for social and economic transformation of the African continent through the RUFORUM Network.

I am glad that several of the development partners in this meeting have existing engagement with the Government of the Republic of Uganda. We as a country are grateful for your investment. Thank you!

Allow me to mention the support that we have received from the Mastercard Foundation, African Development Bank and Islamic Development Bank to directly support young people to access opportunities for quality education at all levels or financial inclusion and access to start-up capital. Allow me also to thank the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that believed in RUFORUM as a network and laid a firm Foundation for what we see now.

I note that this meeting builds on already existing partnerships between the different actors. It is also an opportunity to create new ones.

I take this opportunity to inform you that the Government of the Republic of Uganda supports the discussions taking place in this meeting. I know that the meeting is identifying opportunities that will enable the different partners to pool resources and expertise for the development of our youth, higher education and agriculture.

Recognizing that science, technology and innovations is the currency that will determine the shape of future livelihood in Africa as it is globally. We are committed to investing in higher education, science technology and innovation for the betterment of agriculture in Uganda and the African continent.

The Government of the Republic of Uganda supports the initiatives developed by RUFORUM. Specifically we request the Islamic Development Bank to consider supporting a regional initiative to build Africa's Science Technology and Innovation capacity. We also request the African Development Bank to join hands with African Governments and RUFORUM to strengthen staff capacities

in African universities and efforts to increase the pool of women scientists. The GoU looks forward to working with the Mastercard Foundation to support youth development. We are looking forward to the Arab Bank for Economic Development to strengthen regional initiatives for entrepreneurship and youth employment. We urge OCP morocco to consider using the RUFORUM platform to support human capital development for Africa and for strengthening inter university collaboration. For the Trade and Development Bank, we encourage you to explore possibilities of working with RUFORUM and African Governments to support higher education and development in Africa. For the Gates Foundation we look forward to the continued support to RUFORUM and the agriculture and health sectors in RUFORUM has demonstrated capacity to deliver on the targets that have been set. I am aware that the network is the implementing partner for the African Union Pillar one of the Science Technology and Innovations Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024). This is a vote of confidence at the continental level.

Let me also take this opportunity to inform you that, Uganda is a very beautiful country. We have a wonderful weather, diversity of food, national parks, source of the Nile, lakes, rivers, waterfalls and most importantly, very pleasant people. I dare our first time visitors to spare some time to visit some of these attractions. I assure you it will be time well spent. If you have been here before, please do visit some of the places which you missed the last time you were here.

I wish you all very constructive and fruitful deliberations for the better of the African continent and humanity.

For God and my country

Hon. Dr. Gabriel Aridru Ajedra (MP)

Delivered on 30th September 2019 at Serena Hotel

