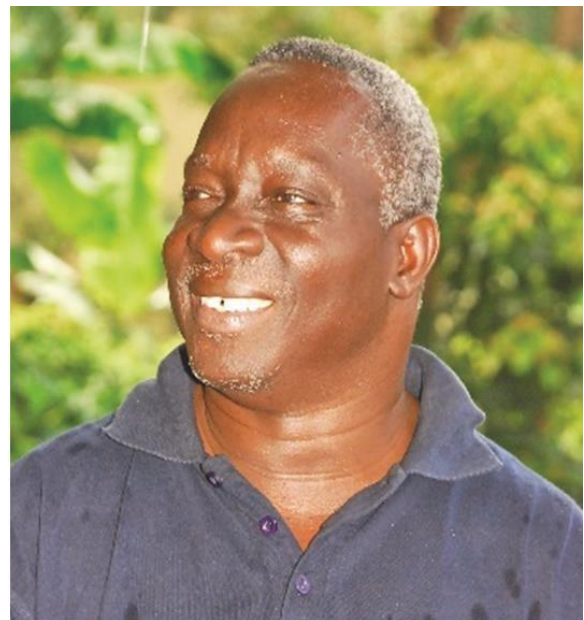




Welcome to the Seventh Africa Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Triennial Conference in Cotonou, Benin



I welcome you to the RUFORUM's Seventh African Higher Education Week and first Triennial Conference to be held from the 6th to 10th December in Cotonou, Benin. As the world deals with the emerging and demanding issues of Climate Change and the COVID-19 pandemic, I recognize and appreciate the collective efforts by African Governments and global community in ensuring the survival of humanity and sustainability of the planet ecosystems. In a special way, I thank the Government of Benin for hosting this Triennial Conference which will give the RUFORUM Network and other actors opportunity to deliberate on needed actions to make Africa better positioned to respond to emerging challenges and create opportunities for improved livelihoods and environmental sustainability in our continent.



Professor Adipala Ekwamu, Executive
Secretary, RUFORUM

Over the years, universities have played a critical role in Africa's development through Research and Development (R&D). However, we believe continued engagement with various Policy Makers across the continent and increased investment by African Governments will fast track our vision for an inclusive and sustainable Africa. During this conference, RUFORUM will reflect on the promises made during our engagement with African Governments and forge a way forward building on our successes and lessons learnt hence the theme *"Operationalising Higher Education for Innovation, Industrialisation, Inclusion and Sustainable Economic Development in Africa: A Call for Action"*



The Communique of the Africa Higher Education Week, 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya, called upon African Governments to;

- a) Increase 'academic mobility schemes' and strengthen Centres of Excellence to enhance mobility, regional level training and economies of scope and scale
- b) Establish a regional initiative to Build Africa's Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity (BASTIC)
- c) Establish a common research fund for strengthening science, technology and innovation capacity in Africa
- d) Endorse the expansion and strengthening of postgraduate training in Agriculture, Science, Technology and Innovation through Africa's Universities Agenda for Agricultural Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (AHESTI), which is alignment to AU educational frameworks.
- e) Commit to work through national mechanisms to legitimize the work of RUFORUM in the Member States through a Charter to be endorsed by the respective Governments in line with the Member States' established procedures.

I recognize and appreciate the support by African Government for the AHESTI initiative, in particular Building Africa's Science, Technology Innovation Capacity and Strengthening Youth Skills Development and Entrepreneurship for which we have received seed funding from the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA).

This week, as we convene to actualize commitments made by our Governments to support Higher Education in Africa, we will assess progress made to operationalize the continental initiatives agreed upon by Africa's Ministers in Ghana in December 2019. We will also use the opportunity to show case some of work being done in universities in Africa, especially to support Youth skill development and Entrepreneurship. During the Triennial Conference, we will recognize and award prizes to three outstanding farmers from Benin, five upcoming young scientists from Benin, 22 Young Innovators in Africa, and 17 individuals who have made significant contribution to Africa's development. Please join us face to face or virtually.





About the Author:

Prof. Adipala Ekwamu is the Executive Secretary of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), a Network of 143 universities in 38 African countries. During this period, he has worked with the Network universities to train over 2000 Masters and more than 650 PhD students from across Africa, and made RUFORUM a leading voice for Higher Education in Africa. Prof. Adipala is a strong advocate for human capital development in Africa, as the fulcrum for Africa’s development, especially in supporting rural transformation and generating innovations to spur economic development in the continent. He holds a PhD in Plant Pathology from the Ohio State University in the United States.

This is our first issue in a series of articles we are releasing as part of the RUFORUM Seventh Africa Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Triennial Conference Digests. More information about the conference is available at <https://www.ruforum.org/Triennial2021/>. Join the Conversation on Social Media using our Official hashtag **#AfricaHEWeek2021**

