



# CONCEPT NOTE

## SECOND RUFORUM TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE

12-16 August 2024, Windhoek, Namibia

Operationalising Higher Agricultural Education and Research Ecosystems for Innovation, Industrialisation and Economic Development in Africa: A Call for Action



Hosting Institutions:



**Contact:**

Prof. Kenneth Matengu and Prof. Osmund D. Mwandemele  
Vice Chancellors, University of Namibia and  
International University of Management

**Email:** kmatengu@unam.na; odmwandemele@ium.edu.na

Prof. Patrick Okori, Executive Secretary, RUFORUM

**Email:** p.okori@ruforum.org

# Expected Participants

## 1. Universities

- Vice Chancellors
- Principals/ Deans
- Academics
- Students
- Alumni
- Registrar
- PROs

## 2. University Networks

- AGRINATURA
- AAU
- IUCEA
- WASCAL
- APLU- USA
- GULF academic network
- Brazil academic network
- ASIA academic network

## 3. Research for Development

- Researchers/ Scientists
- Incubators
- Innovators

## 4. Research Institutions / Networks

- SROs
- RROs
- Extension/Advisory
- CGIAR
- Research programs

## 5. ICT Stakeholders

- Service Providers for academic
- Networks
- Fintech
- Etc.

## 6. Private Sector

- Internet Service providers – commercial
- Industries

### 7. Policy

- Government of Namibia
- Other Governments
- African Union Commission
- Official Development Assistance Agencies

### 8. Philanthropy and Financing Institutions

- Foundations
- Financing Institutions

### 9. End-users

- Farmer organizations
- Private Sector
- consumers

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## BACKGROUND

The African continent envisions an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the International arena through its Agenda 2063. The continent however must make major strides to deliver on this promise given the slow progress Africa, like many other developing economies has made against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. According to the [African Development Bank](#), the Continent's economy remains bullish after the COVID-19 pandemic with a projected growth of 4.1% for the period of 2023-2024. The same report projects significant losses and damages due to increasing extreme weather events that are affecting agriculture, a key sector that underpins the livelihood of the vast majority of Africans. Indeed the Agricultural Sector was projected to grow at 4.1 per cent higher than the global growth rate (2.7 percent) in 2022 according to the [World Bank](#). Africa is also increasing its internet broadband ([14.6% growth in 2021 alone – compared to the global average increase of 8.2%](#)), and therefore, prospects for harnessing the advances in ICT, that are essential for the fourth industrial revolution are increasing. Indeed the Southern African Development Community (SADC) has held high policy-level engagements on how to prioritise investments in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEMs) prerequisites for the fourth industrial revolution.

In spite of the positive economic outlook, in general, growth is not uniform across the continent with major disparities between urban and rural populations, natural resource-endowed versus non-extractive industry-dependent economies, and low and higher altitude ecologies, among others. Indeed, there are [wide gender disparities and inequity](#), especially in the Sahel belt and dry lands of Africa leaving many people behind especially rural young women and men. Additionally, the continent only generates a third of its requisite job placements ([3 million out of 10-12 million annually](#)). Taken together, the mixed bag of opportunities and challenges that the African continent faces to move millions out of poverty by creating resilient and productive economies requires engagement and integration of higher education in the discussions, policy and practice.

The African Universities, through RUFORUM therefore, are essential partners in developing solutions that will underpin the continent's economic transformation. Accordingly, triennially, these universities through their network, the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) meet to assess progress and draw lessons across different sectors of Africa's economy together with policy, industry and development partners.

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## The RUFORUM 2<sup>nd</sup> Triennial Conference, 2024

This year, RUFORUM will hold its Triennial Conference, under the main theme “Operationalising Higher Agricultural Education and Research Ecosystems for Innovation, Industrialisation and Economic Development in Africa: A Call for Action”. It is a response to the urgent needs for the African governments, development partners, private sector and citizenry to take action, to invest in higher education to underpin the continent's urgent development needs in an inclusive and sustainable way. This second Triennial Conference will have in its sidelines, the 20th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting. It is convened with the following objectives:

1. Enable education and agricultural ecosystem actors to showcase and present their key findings, lesson share and inform each other on key actions required to make science work in Africa's development. This objective will be implemented through a scientific programme that will bring together diverse stakeholders involved in Africa's agricultural higher and tertiary education, research, innovations development, policy and industry.
2. Engage lead actors in policy and practice, to identify action areas for further investments in agriculture and higher education. Policy dialogues will be held involving governments, higher education leaders, development partners, research and innovation as well as private sector agencies.
3. Promote international linkages and partnerships for excellence in Higher Education. This objective will support the strengthening of strategic partnerships, collaboration and mutual learning to spur

investments, innovation and transformation of the higher education sector systems in Africa.

4. Provide a platform for discussions, and lesson learning among diverse actors on the subject of creating employment for Africa's young population. Discussions on topical issues such as the future of work, business development and incubation, and linkages among others will be held.
5. Deliberate on the macro and micro needs to adapt smart operations in terms of changing connectivity, education, business practices, sustainable agricultural and value chain transitions and advancement.



## Participation, Venue and Date

The RUFORUM 2nd Triennial Conference will be held in the Republic of Namibia from August 12 – 16, 2024. The five-day conference will bring together policymakers including Ministers and Technical Experts, Higher Education Leaders in Africa, development partners, private sector leaders, researchers, innovators, students, and farmer organizations, among others. Approximately 1000 delegates are expected from across the world. Pre conference training events will take place also in Windhoek Namibia, from August 5 – 9, 2024.

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## Approach and Methodology

The RUFORUM 2<sup>nd</sup> Triennial Conference will take place through different convenings. These include pre-conference events, side events, business meetings, capacity-building sessions, scientific conferences, poster sessions and exhibitions by member universities and other partners. Additionally, high-level policy dialogues such as the Ministerial Roundtable will be held. During the scientific sessions, oral communications and facilitated discussions will be conducted in a blended manner.

The RUFORUM 2<sup>nd</sup> Triennial Conference will be officially opened and closed by senior Government Leaders of Namibia. Guest speakers and leaders will engage to discuss strategic issues affecting higher education and development in Africa. A meeting of Ministers of higher education, agriculture, science, technology and innovation as well as development partners will be held. Additionally, a visit to one of the two member universities or one research institution in Windhoek will be included as part of learning and exploration opportunities for joint activities in the network. Awards in recognition of outstanding achievers including model farmers, young scientists and student researchers from Namibia as well as young innovators from Southern Africa will be made.

On the side-lines of the Triennial Conference, RUFORUM governance organs meetings shall be held, among which, the RUFORUM Annual General Meeting (AGM or Business Meeting) which shall review documents generated in advance by respective Governance Organs and advisory committees. This process provides feedback and guidance to the RUFORUM Secretariat operations to ensure legal compliance and alignment with international standards and practices.

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## Conference organization

With the recognition that the 11th RUFORUM Annual General Meeting was successfully hosted in Namibia in 2015, the 2024 RUFORUM 2<sup>nd</sup> Triennial Conference will be held also in the Republic of Namibia. The Triennial conference and related events will be co-hosted by the



Government of Namibia through the Ministry of Higher Education Technology and Innovation and RUFORUM member Universities in Namibia (the University of Namibia (UNAM), and the International University of Management (IUM)).

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## Conference organizers

### **Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation of the Republic of Namibia**

The Ministry of Higher Education, Technology and Innovation (MHETI) came into existence following the inauguration of Namibia's third President, His Excellency Dr. Hage G. Geingob (now Late MHSRIP) on 21 March 2015. MHETI is premised on three pillars, namely: Higher Education, Technical Vocational Education and Training, and Science, Technology and Innovation. The Ministry is mandated to ensure that quality higher education as well as vocational and technical education is delivered to the Namibian Nation through the advancement of quality programmes and credible projects at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) such as UNAM, Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), IUM and VTCs.

### **University of Namibia**

The University of Namibia (UNAM), is the country's premier institution of tertiary education. It consists of four faculties and 12 campuses country-wide. This outreach makes UNAM a truly community-based institution, renowned for its academic excellence, outstanding research, and community development projects. It is a diverse institution with a student population from 41 countries around the world. Although a relatively young university (since 1992), it has grown to support a student population of over 30,000.

### **International University of Management**

The International University of Management (IUM) was established in 1994 as the Institute of Higher Education by Hon Prof. David Richard Namwandi. The university was officially launched as the first private university in Namibia on 26th October 2002 by the then-state president of the Republic of Namibia, His Excellency Dr. Sam Shafiihuna Nujoma.

From humble beginnings with only one student, IUM has since grown into one of the top universities in Namibia. Today, IUM has a student population of over 16,000 students from all over Namibia, African countries, and beyond. The intellectual and vocational bases of the university are firmly rooted in Management and ICT since its inception, the university has gained recognition as a centre of excellence for the teaching of Management Science and ICT disciplines at all levels.

## **RUFORUM**

Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is an umbrella organization of universities in Africa. The RUFORUM Network was founded in 2004 by the Vice Chancellors of ten (10) universities in Eastern and Southern Africa and registered in Uganda as an International Non-Governmental Organization. RUFORUM's Vision is "vibrant, transformative universities catalysing sustainable, inclusive agricultural development to feed and create prosperity for Africa". To achieve its vision, RUFORUM aims to transform African universities through the transformation of the mode of leadership, training, research and outreach. Currently, RUFORUM has 170 members in 40 African countries across the five regions. RUFORUM Secretariat is hosted by the Government of Uganda at Makerere University's main Campus in Kampala.

## **Participants**

The RUFORUM 2<sup>nd</sup> Triennial Conference will bring together policymakers (including Ministers and Technical Experts), Higher Education Leaders in Africa, Students and alumni, Development Partners, Private Sector Leaders, Researchers, Innovators, and Farmer Organizations, among others. The meeting will involve key actors in Africa's agricultural development such as, The African Union Commission (AUC) and sub - Regional Research Organisations (SROs) across Africa, and key players in the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovations Systems in Africa and beyond. Approximately 1,000 participants are expected to attend the Meeting.

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## Expected Results

- 1) The achievements and key lessons learned by the RUFORUM Network for transforming higher and tertiary education in Africa are profiled to support reform and investments in best practices to solve common problems;
- 2) The RUFORUM corporate financial statements and reports for 2023/2024, as well as the fiscal year work plans, budgets, and external auditor for 2024/2025, approved, and guidance provided to the Secretariat;
- 3) Clarity and convergence on investment opportunities within the network and with partners to strengthen higher education and catalyze African economic development processes;
- 4) African governments identify and agree on key actions to be undertaken (and How) to support higher tertiary education transformation processes in order to equip universities with the capacity to build Africa's human capital and generate development solutions;
- 5) The member universities and their partners present innovations and lessons learned in the application of science to activities that provide solutions for sustainable and profitable agri-food systems;
- 6) The network and partners identify strategic areas and actions that ensure cost leverage and competitiveness in training, research, innovation and entrepreneurship activities;
- 7) African talent and accomplishments are recognized and used to inspire others while also providing lessons for scaling up new ideas and innovations across the continent;
- 8) Students and faculty at member universities are trained in critical science, management, and entrepreneurship skills to improve research, teaching, and learning, as well as development initiatives and
- 9) Deliberations done on the macro and micro needs to adapt smart operations in terms of changing connectivity, education, business practices, sustainable agricultural and value chain transitions and advancement.



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## Conference Organizers and Contacts

The second RUFORUM Triennial Conference will be organized by the Government of Namibia and RUFORUM member universities in Namibia, under the coordination of the Vice Chancellor of the University of Namibia and the Local Organising Committee (LOC) (Prof Nelago Indongo, [nkanime@unam.na](mailto:nkanime@unam.na) LOC Chairperson).

The RUFORUM Secretariat will also provide support to the LOC. For this purpose, the RUFORUM Secretariat has put up a RUFORUM Organizing Committee (ROC), which can be contacted at (Hajjat Dr Sokona Dagnoko, [s.dagnoko@ruforum.org](mailto:s.dagnoko@ruforum.org) ROC Coordinator) with a copy to [triennial@ruforum.org](mailto:triennial@ruforum.org) and [s.nghituwamhata@ruforum.org](mailto:s.nghituwamhata@ruforum.org).

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## Hosting Institutions



**University of Namibia**



**International University of Management, Namibia**



Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM)  
Plot 151/155 Garden Hill, Makerere University Main Campus  
P.O. Box 16811 Kampala, Uganda  
Tel: +256 417 713300 (Office)  
Email: [secretariat@ruforum.org](mailto:secretariat@ruforum.org)  
Website: [www.ruforum.org](http://www.ruforum.org)