

Remarks from Prof Adipala Ekwamu, RUFORUM Executive Secretary, during Webinar 4, 15 July 2020

1. I welcome you all to this Fourth Webinar that RUFORUM, a network of 126 Universities in 38 African countries is hosting. The overall aim of the RUFORUM Webinar Series is to galvanize dialogue and debate on critical issues affecting development landscape not only in Africa, but globally. This is especially important in light of the global challenges mankind is facing today, not only in terms of health concerns but broad livelihood concerns, especially food and nutrition insecurity and environmental degradation. These issues are posing unprecedented challenges and eroding the strides that we have made towards a food and nutrition secure continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen

2. On behalf of the RUFORUM Network, I record our thanks towards efforts by African Governments and their Partners, especially the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), amongst others, and the leadership provided by the Alliance for a Green



Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and others to develop the agricultural sector as the engine for economic growth, business and improved livelihoods in the continent. Certainly, under the African Union's Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) we have made significant strides but not enough to rid the continent of the rampant poverty, and food and nutrition insecurity, and the gains made are being eroded fast due to ravages caused by COVID-19 and new challenges especially environmental change, devastating crop and livestock diseases and pest outbreaks such as of the desert locusts, and now the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. What these mean, is that we must bolster collective response to build resilience and come up with innovative strategies for better and more impactful responsiveness. A lot is underway by different agencies and institutions, and I believe the African Union Commission is galvanizing continental response by our Member States. But what are those efforts? What else should we be doing to halt the widening food and nutrition insecurity? How are we preparing to respond to such future calamities and

changing global landscape? What role will research and indeed Higher Education play in these efforts?

4. As a Network of universities, our Vice Chancellors at the founding of RUFORUM in 2004 committed to mobilize African Universities to respond to the call by African Heads of State and Governments at the launch of the CAADP in 2003 to halt the rampant food and nutrition insecurity in the continent. This invariably called for collaborative undertakings which I strongly believe remains the case today and even with greater urgency.
5. In light of the challenge posed by COVID-19 and other challenges, as a Network of African Universities we have proposed four strategic intervention areas for which we are seeking partnerships:
 - a. Strengthening capacity for preparedness, response and monitoring disease outbreaks-looking at infectious diseases and their reemergence: this was the focus of our last (Third) Webinar
 - b. Re-imagining Higher Education in the post COVID-19 pandemic crisis and re-aligning teaching, learning and research environment in Africa: this was the focus of our First and Second Webinars

- c. Strengthening capacity to respond to invasive pests and crop-livestock diseases in Africa. This will be the focus of our next Webinar on 29th July 2020
- d. Nexus approaches for helping farmers and rural communities make better decisions and gain from food chains and transforming agri-food systems-
6. This is the purpose of today's Webinar: *To lesson learn from each other and explore opportunities for collaborative action to strengthen agricultural development and Food and Nutritional Security in the Continent.* We are highly privileged to have with us very distinguished speakers who will share their perspective on the topic **Delivering Food for Africa in a Transforming Agri-food System in the 'new normal'**
7. I thank each one of them, and our Moderator, the Pro-Vice Chancellor of University of Cape Coast Ghana, for accepting to be part of this high level discussion. I also thank you distinguished participants for joining the Webinar. Please do participate actively in the dialogue through the Chat box and Question and Answer session
8. We are recording the Webinar and it will be available in our media outlets. Please watch the video

recordings of the previous webinars on the RUFORUM website ([Link](#))

9. Let me end by thanking our Moderator and Panelists for today, and also you participants: We greatly appreciate your participation. I invite you to join us on 29 July 2020 when we will be focusing on **Building a Regional Collective Response to Invasive pests and transboundary crop-livestock diseases** and this will be followed by another Webinar on 31 July 2020 jointly organized with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on **The importance of Family Farmers' Wellbeing to Africa's Realization of Sustainable Development Goals**

Thank you and I wish you good deliberations

15 July 2020