



The Sixth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference 2018

Venue: Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC)

Conference Communiqué

Issued 26 October, 2018

Conference Theme: “Aligning African Universities to accelerate attainment of Africa’s Agenda 2063”

We, 20 Ministers of Higher Education, over 30 senior government officials and experts, 105 Vice Chancellors, 105 Principals and Deans, and 530 students, met at the Sixth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference from 22-26 October, 2018 at the Kenya International Convention Center in Nairobi, Kenya. The overall objective of the Conference was to provide a platform for dialogue on the role of agricultural universities in Africa’s development agenda and to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 and, subsequently, the African Union Agenda 2063. The Conference was organized under the overall theme of “Aligning African Universities to accelerate attainment of Africa’s Agenda 2063”. The Government of Kenya through its Ministry of Education and nine RUFORUM member universities¹ in Kenya were the lead organizers of the Conference.

The Conference was organized into pre-conference events, plenary events and scientific technical parallel sessions. Prior to the Conference, from 16-21 October, pre-conference events were held including training on intellectual property rights management, leadership and management, social media and training for public relations officers of universities, Forum for Women Vice Chancellors in Africa, a round table meeting of African higher education ministers, and high level dialogue between Africa and Korea on higher education. RUFORUM governance meetings were also held: The RUFORUM Annual General meeting, Board, Principals and Deans, Technical and International Advisory Panels of RUFORUM, amongst other events.

¹ The nine member universities are the University of Nairobi, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, Egerton University, Kenyatta University, University of Eldoret, Moi University, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, Karatina University and South Eastern Kenya University.

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The Conference was attended by 1107 delegates representing governments, academia, the private sector, farmers, civil society organizations, banks, students and other organizations.

The Conference was officially opened by H.E. Uhuru Kenyatta, President of the Republic of Kenya, after an address by Mrs. Janet Kataaha Museveni, First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Hon. Naledi Pandor, Minister for Higher Education, South Africa and Ambassador (Dr.) Amina Mohammed, Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kenya. Overall, following 20 preconference and side events, 12 plenary sessions and 18 parallel sessions were held to discuss issues related to strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa. The discussion highlighted key issues underpinning the current trends in African higher education and resolved to take specific action to support the realisation of Agenda 2063.

The meeting noted that:

1. By 2040, the continent's labor force is expected to reach 1 billion, over one quarter of the World's population, surpassing China and India. Demand for higher education in Africa will continue to increase in the next decade, putting massive pressure on the quality and relevance of education.
2. Over 800 million in Africa still face hunger, poverty and malnutrition. Achieving Agenda 2063 will require a critical mass of well-educated citizens with requisite skills to revolutionize production and off farm services including delivery of agri-food and services.
3. Advancement of gender equality and equity in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) are explicit objectives under several of the SDGs and underpin the achievement of all of them
4. In a globalized and competitive knowledge-based economy, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) especially at post graduate level, play a pivotal role in training the required critical mass of human resources required to deploy science, technology and innovation;
5. Postgraduate training programs are heavily constrained by low numbers of PhD qualified staff at African universities coupled with low investment in research, low completion rate as well as high numbers of undergraduate students which further impinges on the quality of postgraduate programs at African universities. Only 40% of total university staff in Sub Saharan Africa (SSA) have PhDs.
6. Sub Saharan Africa research output is low, contributing less than 3% of global research output yet makes up over 17% of the world's population. Africa provided less than 0.1% of the global registered patents, compared to South Korea which alone had over 1.5% of the patents.

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Cognisant that:

- Africa needs to produce significantly more PhDs who can contribute to the science and innovation agendas needed to promote development. Limited funding inhibits the development of more graduate programmes
- Post graduate training is largely funded by development partners, which constrains the ability to respond to local problems and challenges with long term scientific based solutions. Post graduate training can also play an important role in improving the quality of teaching at the undergraduate level.
- Agri food systems in Africa are evolving, in response to demographic and economic changes on the African continent. Demand for protein and meat products is projected to increase significantly, as more African's earn more.
- 62% of the indicators in Agenda 2063 itself cannot be tracked due to lack of data and/or poor data.
- RUFORUM, a network of 104 African universities in Africa, has the mandate to implement the science, technology and innovation strategy for Africa, particularly priority one on eradicating hunger and ensuring food security.

Recalling

Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.572 (XXV) whereby the Assembly committed to the establishment of a team of ten Heads of State and Government as African champions of Education, Science and Technology. The Republic of Malawi will host the first Summit of the Committee of Ten 2-3 November 2018.

The Sixth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference participants deliberated on these key issues and agreed that:

As African universities together resolve to:

1. Enhance the sharing of knowledge, lessons and experiences with international and regional partners to facilitate and accelerate university transformation for relevance in Africa
2. Focus on strengthening agribusiness innovation in Africa through improving the entrepreneurial spirit of graduates to contribute to employment creation for young people, both through self-employment and the creation of new employment opportunities;
3. Make use of academic mobility to accelerate the training of a critical mass of well qualified faculty in Africa and ensure that they are retained locally to support teaching

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and research. The RUFORUM Graduate Teaching Assistantship (GTA) is a good example of a strong self-help program that needs to be supported;

4. Strengthen use of ICTs to improve the decentralization of teaching and learning, enhance access to the wider public, and reduce the costs of education in Africa;
5. Provide programs, schemes and incentives that will ensure the training and mentoring of women scientists in Africa
6. Build the necessary skills and knowledge to drive agri food systems transformation that responds to the needs of the agri-food sector in Africa.
7. Improve on postgraduate completion rates and support for women scientists through increased funding for research and structured supervision and improved administrative systems
8. Strengthen research capacity and excellence in African universities.

Call upon African governments to:

9. Increase 'academic mobility schemes' and strengthen Centres of Excellence to enhance mobility, regional level training and economies of scope and scale.
10. Establish Research Chairs in African universities to promote research excellence and addressing critical issues in Africa such as in the areas of Data Analytics and Management, Nutrition, Soil and Water Management, and Foresight studies
11. Establish a common research fund for strengthening African science, technology and innovation in Africa
12. To take the commendations of the Ministerial Round table meeting to the Committee of Ten Heads of State championing Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa;
13. Relook at curriculum from primary through higher education, including technical, vocational and technical education with a view to improving the attractiveness of agricultural courses and agriculture as a profession
14. Provide the necessary infrastructure required to pursue and own a science, technology and innovation agenda and harness digital technologies for enhancing education and learning, and agricultural productivity from farm to fork;
15. Bridge the gender gap in science by increasing the female participation to support of Agenda 2063 vision of quality education and gender equality.
16. Strengthen foresight capacity at African universities and other partners and support capacity building in this important area to support planning and future implementation of key programs.
17. Establish a regional initiative to Build Africa's Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity (BASTIC)

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18. Endorse the expansion and strengthening of postgraduate training in Agriculture, Science, Technology and Innovation through Africa's Agricultural Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (AHESTI) in alignment with AU educational frameworks.
19. 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.

The Conference further **affirms** the commitment of the RUFORUM network and partners to champion African higher education that generates contextualised agricultural innovations for enhanced food and nutrition security.

This Communiqué was issued on the 26st day of October 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya

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