

## THE RUFORUM INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY PANEL MEETING

### Concept Note

**Date:** 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2017

**Venue and Hall:** Bingu International Conference Centre, Lilongwe, Malawi

### Background

Established in 2004, The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is a Network of 66 African universities whose vision is ‘a vibrant agricultural sector linked to African universities which produce high performing graduates and high-quality research responsive to the demands of Africa’s farmers for innovations and able to generate sustainable livelihoods and national economic development’. The Network has been successful at strengthening the engagement of universities in development discourse, underpinned by a dynamic Secretariat. The Network has several unique features for building Africa’s innovation capacity and for engaging universities in development process and practice; i) It is owned and managed by Africans; ii) It derives its agenda largely from the continent wide policy frameworks especially of the African Union Agenda 2063 and the New Partnership for African Development’s (NEPAD) Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), The African Union Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2024, Africa Union Policy Framework on Revitalizing Higher Education in Africa, the Sub regional Multi–Country Agricultural Productivity Programmes, The National Strategy Papers of the member States and Governments and constant review of global trends and foresight planning to ensure Africa has the required capacity for global competitiveness; and iii) it allows for joint action by the member universities and stakeholders in higher education and agricultural sectors.

RUFORUM’s vibrancy emanates from its own character, which a) allows for ownership and direction of network activities by member universities, b) for identification of priorities from national level to inform regional thrusts, c) ensures broad consultation and consensus on regional level activities by members, and d) promotes sharing of resources, rather than competition, across the network for capacity building in agriculture.

The International Advisory Panel (IAP) a sub-committee of the RUFORUM Board, plays a key role in supporting the Board and the Secretariat to position the RUFORUM network to take advantage of the opportunities in, particularly, the external environment. Composed of eight individuals from both within and outside

Africa, the IAP brings together high level individuals with a wealth of experience and that are strategically placed to support RUFORUM better understand the external environment. The IAP meets physically once a year, but may meet from time to time through online platforms / telephone to support the Secretariat with relevant programmatic and other advice.

## Rationale

The RUFORUM strategic and Business Plan (2015-2020) which was launched in August, 2015 in Windhoek, Namibia highlights the key issues that require consideration and positioning by RUFORUM network in order to remain effective against a background of fast changing donor landscape. As part of its own development, the SBP called for a mid-term review in 2017/18 to support the charting of the next steps for RUFORUM's evolution. The review highlighted important issues for the network to consider in its strategic orientation. It also called for a visioning process that would complement the current efforts by the organization to enhance its sustainability.

Since then, RUFORUM has initiated a visioning process to identify how best the network will be able to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in the future. The visioning process has identified the need to link RUFORUM's institutional objectives and work to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) whose timeframe is for 2030. The visioning also has considered that RUFORUM will need to respond directly to the African Union Agenda 2063, together with other key frameworks of the African Union, such as the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) and the related Malabo Declaration, the Science Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2024 and others.

At the same time, RUFORUM's initiatives continue to evolve and RUFORUM has engaged with various development partners as well as government policy makers to support financially and otherwise, the evolution of the network. Since the last meeting, various steps have been taken to work within various initiatives and enhance the work of RUFORUM. Some of the important issues for consideration include:

1. The Committee of ten heads of state and government for which the first meeting is expected early in 2018;
2. The regional initiative on strengthening higher agricultural education in Africa (SHAEA) which is expected to be funded by the World Bank is currently under development and hopes to work within 6-8 African countries, identify anchor university and support agricultural transformation on the continent;



3. New proposed addition focus on postdoctoral training and engagement with TVET institutions that would widen the scope of RUFORUM operations from its current activities.

**Purpose of this Side Event** This meeting will focus enable RUFORUM’s International Advisory Panel to meet and deliberate on the current and future status of the RUFORUM network and provide relevant advise to the Secretariat. It will also draw upon the wide experience of the IAP to inform the operations of the network based on existing and upcoming initiative related to RUFORUMs operations.

**Objectives of the Side Event** The IAP meeting during the next meeting have the following objectives

1. Receive updates from the Secretariat on RUFORUM activities;
2. To reflect and consider key programmatic challenges facing the Secretariat programming and make recommendations for improvements;
3. Provide advice to the Board and Secretariat on how to best position the RUFORUM network in its policy engagements in support of Higher Education in Africa;
4. Discuss and provide input into the:
  - a. RUFORUM engagement with the World Bank on the regional initiative on agricultural higher education;
  - b. Resource mobilization and strategic partnerships;
5. Provide guidance on key issues arising from the mid-term evaluation of the RUFORUM Strategic Business Plan (2015-2020) and strategic actions going forward;
6. Provide input towards RUFORUM’s 2030 visioning process.

**Approach and Methodology** The meeting will be guided by the agenda, and its Chair person, who will facilitate the meeting. The closed meeting will discuss and provide recommendations to the Board and Secretariat in line with the above objectives

**Venue and Participants** The Side event will be convened on 24<sup>th</sup> October, 2017 at the Bingu International Conference Centre, Lilongwe, Malawi. The meeting will be attended by the IAP members and selected representative(s) of the Secretariat.

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