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Reflection

On the Call for Action for Operationalising Higher Education for Innovation, Industrialisation, Inclusion and Sustainable Economic Development in Africa

The Seventh African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Triennial Conference

Date: Friday, 10th December, 2021

Venue: **Palais des Congres, Cotonou, Benin**

Link: <https://bit.ly/3mfEIQo>

Time: **From 1500 WAT (GMT +1)**

Format:- Panel Discussion

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Background

The Seventh African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Triennial Conference 2021, co-hosted by member universities in Benin in partnership with the Government of Benin, has been running since the virtual launch in August 2021 under the theme: *Operationalising Higher Education for Innovation, Industrialisation, Inclusion and Sustainable Economic Development in Africa: A Call for Action*. It is important to reflect on how the different events have contributed towards the theme and the **CALL TO ACTION** that was envisaged at the inception of the Triennial Conference events that come to a close on 10th December 2021. The reflection embodies, two main questions. 1) What are the actions? and, 2) Who are the actors? As RUFORUM stakeholders, constituents and well-wishers we need to pause and explore the possibilities and options for engagement.

The RUFORUM Network envisions '*vibrant, transformative universities to catalyse sustainable, inclusive agricultural development to feed and create prosperity for Africa*'. The Network is targeting elevation of appreciation of and movement towards knowledge economies. It is imperative to examine the role and contribution of universities towards sustainable livelihoods on the African continent. First, through reflection and changes in the institutions leadership context, content and approach to development practice. Second, through changes in focus and appreciating the symbiotic relationships across i) institutions in the network, regionally and global, ii) relationships disciplines, iii) communities and universities, iv) the education value chain v) the agricultural value chain, and vi) demographics. And third, institutional changes will be influenced by national, regional and global policy frameworks and context, specifically, National Development Plans and Visions, the African Union Agenda 2063, the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) and the Malabo Declaration, the African Union Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2024, Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025 as well as the Sustainable Development Goals.

On the Actions

The RUFORUM Network as a home-grown initiative has several unique features for building Africa's innovation capacity and for engaging universities in development process and practice. How do we harness these features for inclusive strengthening of Science Technology and & Innovation to improve agri-food systems and livelihoods.

On the Actors

This concept note serves as a springboard for discussion on how the RUFORUM network can utilize the resources (human, financial, institutional) to *Operationalise Higher Education for Innovation, Industrialisation, Inclusion and Sustainable Economic Development in Africa*. The reflection identifies **key actors** and their role in taking forward the agreed actions. The reflection captures the frameworks to ensure delivery of the agreed actions. It captures expectations from policy, private sector, academia and community perspectives. These perspectives are grounded in their experience and from the dialogues and emerging issues from the Triennial Conference.

Discussion Format

The panel discussion during the closing session of the 7th higher education week and RUFORUM Triennial Conference focusing on the Future of Africa and how we move forward with:

- 1- Catalysing investment in Higher Education for human capital development in Africa;
- 2- Promoting international linkages and partnerships for excellence in Higher Education;
- 3- Strengthening collaboration and mutual learning to spur innovation and industrialisation for economic transformation in Africa;
- 4- Promoting youth employment and skills acquisition for development; and,

- 5- Strengthening University-Private sector business linkages.

Panel Representatives

Panel Moderator: Prof. Christine Dranzoa, Vice Chancellor, Muni University, Uganda

Lead Speaker: Prof. Umezuruike Linus Opara, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Panelists:

- 1- Prof. Frans Swanepoel, University of Pretoria, South Africa
- 2- Prof. Coumba Touré Kane, Rector, Université du Sine Saloum El-Hâdj Ibrahima NIASS (USSEIN), Senegal
- 3- Prof. Ophelia Weeks, Former President, University of Liberia
- 4- Prof. Patrick Okori, ICRISAT, Mozambique
- 5- Dr Steven Muchiri, President, East African Farmers Federation

The Moderator will guide the discussion to articulate areas of engagement and focus as synthesised from the Triennial Conference and key policy frameworks.