



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

Meeting of Permanent Secretaries Responsible for Agriculture, Education & Training, Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa convened during the

The Seventh African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Triennial Conference

Governments' Technical Experts
Round Table Dialogue

Date: Monday 6th December, 2021

Time: 0900-1330

Venue: **TBC**

Focus: Technical Review of Progress in Implementation of Ministerial Decisions and Initiatives as agreed in Cape Coast, Ghana in December 2019

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Background

In 2018, Universities in Africa under the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Africa (RUFORUM) network, adopted the African Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy (AHESTI)/ [Vision 2030](#) as a guiding framework for strengthening universities' contribution to Africa's development. This was premised on the realisation that universities and their constituents have a significant role towards sustainable development to meet the Agenda 2063 and SDG targets. Knowledge brokerage, science, technology and innovations will drive these Agenda if Africa is to realise any tangible benefits.

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RUFORUM was established by Vice Chancellors to meet three basic objectives:

1. Provide a platform for **networking, resource mobilization and advocacy** to transform universities for relevance towards inclusive sustainable development
2. **Rationalize resource** use and enhance economies of scale and scope
3. Provide a **platform for training quality graduates** to support development processes in Africa

In fulfilment of these objectives and in line with the governance structures that were instituted, RUFORUM has organised convenings that bring together diverse stakeholders to deliberate, the contribution of universities to the development agenda, university-policy engagement has brought evidence-based decision making at the forefront; and the exploration of university-public, private and informal sectors linkages as the future of transition to the world of work for graduates.

Against this background, the [2016 Cape Town Annual General Meeting and Biennial Conference](#) hosted a Ministerial Round table that recommended a more structured approach to the initiatives that support higher education. The [2018 Ministerial meeting](#) held during the Sixth Africa Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference in Nairobi challenged African Universities to develop regional investment programmes for enhancing human capital development. Five continental initiatives notably, (i) the Strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa (SHAEA); (ii) Building Africa's Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity (BASTIC); (iii) Strengthening Africa's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Capacity (SASTIE); (iv) Regional Initiative to Strengthen Staff Capacity and Increase the Pool of Women Scientists in Africa (RISSCAW); and (v) the African Digital Agricultural Platform (AfriDAP) were endorsed by the 2019 [Ministerial Round table during the 15th Annual General Meeting](#) in Cape Coast Ghana that was organised under the Delivering on Africa's Universities Agenda for Higher Agricultural Education, Science, Technology and Innovation (AHESTI): "What will it take?" theme.

While there has been some progress since the December 2019 Cape Coast Ghana AGM, there have also been challenges notably the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to review these initiatives and establish pathways for operationalisation if the intended outcomes towards Africa's economic development are to be realised.

Objectives of the Technocrats Round-Table Meeting

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The technical Experts' roundtable is one of the meetings to be held during the 2021 African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Triennial Conference to be hosted by the Government of Benin, 6th December 2021. The overall objective on the round table is to review progress and map out a pathway for the operationalisation of the Cape Coast and other continental initiatives for universities to contribute to the regional and global agendas. This will be a technical review that will feed into the proposed ministerial meeting. Specifically, the Technocrats Round Table Dialogue will be held:

1. To review the commitments made by the Cape Coast Ghana Ministerial Meeting and agree on key action points for the development of agriculture, science, technology and innovations in Africa;
2. To consider priorities and constraints to adoption and adaptation of the recommendations made by the [Lilongwe Declaration](#) of the United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) Heads of State University-policy dialogue for strengthening resilience;
3. To review progress on the Strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa (SHA EA) initiative and the systemic implications on Higher Agricultural Education (HAE) on the continent; and,
4. To receive update on RUFORUM implementation of the tasks assigned to it under the Committee of Ten Heads of State Championing Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa (C10) Lilongwe 2018 Summit Action Plan.

Approach

The technocrats meeting is designed to provide an in-depth analysis and discussions on the status of agriculture, science, technology and innovations in Africa. The round table will draw participants from Ministries of Agriculture, Higher Education and or Science and technology in dialogue with development partners for the realisation of the science and technology agenda for Africa.

The round table will have a keynote address on **the human capital investment in the knowledge driven economy**. The key note address is expected to stimulate engagement and discussion as well as facilitate dialogue amongst policy makers, higher education practitioners and development partners.

The second session is reserved for reviewing the progress in Implementation and the operationalisation of the five key continental initiatives, with special focus on 4:

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1. *Strengthening Higher Agricultural Education in Africa (SHAEA)*
2. *Strengthening Africa's Innovation and Entrepreneurship Capacity for Economic Development (SASTIE)* and the Pilot Feasibility Study for Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship in the Agricultural Sector undertaken in Uganda
3. *Proposal on a Joint Initiative to strengthen Staff capacities in African Universities and increase the pool of Women scientists (RISSCAW)*
4. The African Digital Agricultural Platform (AfriDAP)

The meeting will provide technical evidence on the country specific needs, gaps and required strategic actions for effectively harnessing STI regional cooperation for economic development through the five initiatives. While noting that operationalisation will require partnerships with a multi stakeholder focus at national and continental level the meeting will include technical experts and other stakeholders.

The final output will be an Action Plan to be presented to the Ministerial Round Table scheduled for Tuesday 07th December 2021.

Meeting venue

The meeting will be held on **Monday, 6th December, 2021**, from 9:00 to 1330 at **XXXXX**. The session Chair will be the Director of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Government of Benin

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