Press Release

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Strengthening University-Private Sector Partnerships in Agriculture – The Fifth RUFORUM Biennial Conference and African Higher Education Week

14th July, 2016
Kampala, Uganda

Over 600 delegates, including 300 graduate students, 60 university Vice-Chancellors, policy makers, development partners and several delegates from all over Africa, Asia, Europe and America will convene at the Fifth RUFORUM Biennial Conference and African Higher Education Week during the week of 17-21 October 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa. Key Speakers confirmed for this conference include; Her Excellency Ameenah Gurib-Fakim, The President of Mauritius, Her Excellency Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, African Union Chair and Reeta Roy, The President and Chief Executive Officer at The MasterCard Foundation.

Higher Education has been highlighted as a critical component of implementing the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024), and the African Union Agenda 2063. The RUFORUM African Higher Agricultural Education Weeks and RUFORUM Biennial Conferences, conceptually, focus on providing a platform for African Universities and other higher education stakeholders, including graduate students, to discuss and tackle ‘frontier’ issues that are critical in transforming African Universities towards enhanced relevance for development in Africa, particularly through postgraduate training. The Conferences showcase RUFORUM students’ and other cutting edge university-led research in Africa.

The Fifth African Higher Agricultural Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference will be held 17-21 October 2016 in Cape Town, South Africa along the theme “Linking Agricultural Universities with Civil Society, Private Sector, Governments and other Stakeholders in support of Agricultural Development in Africa”. The Conference is co-organized with the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), Centre for Coordinating Agricultural Research in Southern Africa (CCARDESA), and six RUFORUM member universities in South Africa namely Stellenbosch University, University of Free State, University of Fort Hare, University of KwaZulu-Natal, University of Pretoria and University of Venda.
The event will feature distinguished speakers, plenary sessions, parallel side meetings, an exhibition, and merit awards in agricultural education, research and innovation. For the first time, the conference will place special emphasis on university-private sector partnerships.

“For too long, universities in Africa have operated in a bubble, opaque to the needs of the private sector. Investment in higher education will give us less returns if our products do not address the market demands”, said Prof. Adipala Ekwamu of RUFORUM. “Learning about the issues surrounding university-stakeholder collaborations and crafting how to nurture, grow and maintain these partnerships is the focus of the Fifth RUFORUM Biennial Conference and African Higher Education Week ”, he added.

The conference is open to all stakeholders in higher education and agricultural development in Africa. Graduate students in agricultural and related sciences, researchers, academicians, development practitioners, philanthropists, civil society, private sector institutions and policy bodies are hereby invited to participate. A call for abstracts is now open for participants who would like to present papers at the event.

Information about registration, application for side events and exhibitions is available on the conference website. You can also join the conversation on Twitter using #AfricaHEWeek2016 and follow @ruforumsec for updates.

Notes to Editors:

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is a network of 60 African Universities with mission to ‘strengthen the capacities of Universities to foster innovations responsive to demands of small-holder farmers through the training of high quality researchers, the output of impact oriented research and the maintenance of collaborative working relations among researchers, farmers, national agricultural research institutions’. RUFORUM was established in 2004, with Secretariat hosted by Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. RUFORUM signed MoU with the African Union and has mandate to support capacity building for science, research and technology development in Africa. RUFORUM has supported the training of over 1500 postgraduate students, the generation of over 300 agricultural technologies and mobilized over US$70 million for strengthening postgraduate education in Africa. Please visit www.ruforum.org for more information.

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