

Press Release



22nd May 2025

Botswana to Host the 21st RUFORUM Annual General Meeting



Gaborone International Convention Centre. Photo Credit: RLB

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is pleased to announce its 21st Annual General Meeting (AGM), scheduled to take place from 1st to 5th December 2025 in Gaborone, Botswana. Themed *"Positioning Africa's Universities and the Higher Education Sector to Effectively Impact Development Processes on the Continent"*, the AGM will bring together over 600 participants including university leaders, policymakers, development partners, private sector actors, captains of industry, young innovators, students and researchers from across Africa and around the world.

Hosted in collaboration with the Government of Botswana by Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (BUAN), University of Botswana (UB), Botswana International University of Science and Technology (BIUST) and RUFORUM member universities, the AGM will serve as a platform for strategic dialogue and collective action to strengthen the role of African universities in delivering sustainable development outcomes.

This year's AGM will focus on the following sub themes:

Sub theme 1. Strategic partnerships for growth: Building bridges for the future –This sub theme will analyze how collaborations could be optimized to support university mission and development priorities delivery, as well as mobilize and rationalize resources, promote knowledge transfer, and address shared contemporary challenges. This will include multilateral and bilateral

meetings (i) South - South collaborations such as Africa-Africa, Africa-China, and Africa-New Zealand; and (ii) North-South collaborations such as Africa-EU, and Africa-North America.

Sub theme 2. Science for development: Generating contemporary and relevant solutions at scale

The Meetings will explore opportunities for strengthening science and innovation capacities of African Universities. Three key sub activities include: (i) Building university-led strategic partnerships for research, training and development; (ii) A scientific conference; (iii) Translating science into development i.e. market transitions for science solutions by enhancing scaling of best practices, business and jobs creation, entrepreneurship, agribusiness and employment, start-up business incubation and communicating science for development impact among others. Digital advances for market transitioning and value chain support; hackathons and investor pitch sessions will also be held for upcoming young entrepreneurs. Case studies of successful science-driven businesses that bridge the gap between research institutions and agricultural communities will be shared.

Sub-theme 3. Capacity sharing to train the next generation of leaders in agri-food systems transformation

The second decade of the African Union Agenda 2063 (STYIP) is underpinned by effective science and policy driven agendas that are multi sectorial in nature. This conference sub-theme will explore how cooperative capacity development approaches might transcend continental disparities in expertise, facilities, and innovation. Emerging platforms and models such as digital networks and open science platforms for improving access to learning and research infrastructure, joint research and academic mobility programmes that harmonize competencies and foster cross-border learning, and regional centres of excellence and thematic consortia that consolidate talent and infrastructure will be examined for scaling and resourcing. Vice Chancellors' Forum will discuss strategies to enhance capacity sharing among universities within countries, and between sub-regions to support the implementation of policy frameworks such as STYIP and CAADP 2026-2035.

Sub theme 4. RUFORUM Business Meetings

As statutory, governance organs meet at least once a year to review the reports and progress of RUFORUM and guide the organisation in mission delivery. The Annual General Assembly is the supreme decision-making organ, which guides the overall orientation of RUFORUM's mission and programmes. It brings together both core and associate members of the network. Under this sub theme, key meetings such as the RUFORUM Annual General Assembly, Principals and Deans Committee meetings as well as other governance meetings will be held.

Speaking ahead of the event, **Prof. Patrick Okori**, Executive Secretary of RUFORUM, stated, *"Our universities are central to Africa's development. By focusing on collaboration, science, and skills, this AGM will help shape the future of higher education in Africa to be more responsive, inclusive, and impactful. We are honored to work with the Government of Botswana in advancing this vision."*

Notes to Editors:

About RUFORUM

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) was created in 2004 by ten Vice Chancellors of universities in Africa. To date the network has grown to 175 universities across 40 countries in the five regions of eastern, southern, central, west, and north Africa.

The RUFORUM network collaborates globally with other university networks, development partners, policymakers, and leaders to leverage synergies and work towards shared objectives in delivering science solutions for development, human capital development, and institutional reform in the African Higher Agricultural Education (HAE) system. We recognize that youth are the driving force behind change and are leading the charge for a better Africa. The network is African-owned, aligned with country goals, and thrives in multi-stakeholder engagement that promotes equity and implements gender responsive interventions.

RUFORUM is nested within continental and global frameworks, including the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), Africa's Agenda 2063, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals among a few. Please visit www.ruforum.org for more information.

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