



21st RUFORUM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

CONCEPT NOTE

PRE-LAUNCH WEBINAR

Date: Thursday 31st July 2025 **Time:** 14.00-16:00 CAT (15:00-17:00 EAT: 12:00-14:00 GMT)

Register here: <https://bit.ly/40jh1ue>



BACKGROUND

The African Development Bank's economic outlook report for this year indicates that the continent's economy, while stable and anticipated to grow by approximately 3.9% in 2025, confronts increasing geopolitical concerns and trade tensions. On a positive note, the report also indicates that for the past three straight years, eight (8) out of the 20 fastest expanding economies globally each year are African, with projections suggesting this number could rise to 13 by 2025. This growth must be underpinned by African countries leveraging key capital assets, the human capital being key. Africa must intensify training of quality graduates as well as deploy and retain them on the continent. This requires acceleration of investments in appropriate education equipping the continent's young population with 21st technical and social skills for work readiness and enhanced work transitions. Africa's higher education sector especially predominantly teaching agriculture and related institutions have a significant role to play. Growth in agriculture being the most effective way to ensure widespread reduction of poverty and better livelihoods for masses.

The RUFORUM 2025 AGM coincides with the launch of the refreshed continent-wide strategy Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) 2026-2035 Kampala Declaration. The refreshed CAADP strategy focuses on building resilient agri-food systems in Africa, and is a vehicle for achieving the Africa Unions' Agenda 2063, whose Second Ten-Year Implementation Plan 2024 – 2034 (STYIP) aims to accelerate economic growth and development. These continental strategies underscore the necessity for Africa's higher education sector to proactively engage in development planning, resourcing, execution and measurement. Additionally, the STYIP Aspiration number six¹ specifically aims to raise Africa's contribution to global scientific research output by fivefold (10%), with at least half of the research output translating into innovations, enhanced production, and productivity. The CAADP Strategic Objective 6² stresses the role of strong institutions and human capital. The African Union's Youth Charter take cognizance of the need for multiple forms of education including formal, non-formal, informal, distance learning and lifelong learning as key mechanisms to equip young people with work ready skills. An integrated education system that could produce the right work force adding \$47 billion to Africa's GDP³.

As RUFORUM starts its 3rd decade of existence, it is imperative that the network aligns its mission to deliver the continent's development aspirations especially its human capital needs to unlock a demographic dividend⁴. This is important given the call to action by the continent, through its Youth Employment Strategy,(YES-Africa⁵) that aims to shape the future world of work for the continent's

¹ **Aspiration 6:** An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children.

² **Strategy objective 6:** Strengthening Institutional and Human Capacity at All Levels (National, Regional, and Continental).

³ <https://www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/press-releases/african-economic-outlook-2025-africas-short-term-outlook-resilient-despite-global-economic-and-political-headwinds-84038>

⁴ A demographic dividend is the economic growth potential resulting from shifts in a population's age structure, particularly when a larger proportion of the population is of working age compared to the dependent population

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young people through strategic collaboratives. This year, the AGM will be held in Gaborone, Botswana hosted by the Government and RUFORUM member universities. The AGM avails Botswana, Africa, and partners the opportunity to highlight the continent's contemporary development challenges and possibilities, as well as the atmosphere to co-create roadmaps for solutions. The conference theme is **“Positioning Africa’s Universities and the Higher Education Sector to effectively impact development processes on the continent.”**

PRE-AGM EVENTS

The AGM events annually start in July and this year, the pre- meetings events will include webinars, as well as online and in person training sessions in: Advanced data management and analytics in both biophysical and social-sciences; post graduate student supervision, young scientist mentoring sessions, proposal development, scientific writing and communication for impact; among others. Other pre-AGM activities include development of new graduate, post-graduate and undergraduate curricula involving shared and non-shared degrees; strategic partnerships between science-leaders within the Network i.e., centres of excellence, the Botswana higher education day (BoHED) and technology hackathons. These will be formally launched via a webinar.

OVERALL OBJECTIVE

The prelaunch event will be held as a blended meeting (virtual and in-person). The overall objective of this pre-launch meeting is to bring together the RUFORUM Network, the host country Government and its agencies, as well as other key stakeholders of Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) to initiate dialogue and pave way for a successful conference in Botswana.

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. Analyse the essential factors for positioning African universities and the higher education sector to effectively influence development processes.
2. Examine the integration of African universities into development processes and practices as a scientific solution and evidence provider for policy by identifying the imperatives, gaps, and opportunities.
3. Formally launch the first round of training events starting with strengthening capacity for research.

APPROACH

The blended meeting will be hosted by BUAN and will consist of plenary presentations and discussions, moderated by a facilitator. The meeting will be presided over by RUFORUM and the Government. The official opening will be made by the honourable of Minister of Higher Education.



Eminent personalities of the agricultural academia and AKIS stakeholders will present background papers and discuss key issues.

DATE AND VENUE

This webinar will take place virtually on Thursday 31st July 2025 from 14:00 – 16:00 CAT, Botswana Time (GMT+2). Register here ([LINK](#)) to participate in the webinar.

EXPECTED PARTICIPANTS

Over 300 participants are expected. They will be drawn from; Policymakers (including Ministers and Technical Experts), RUFORUM member universities throughout the continent, Higher Education and Agricultural sector of Botswana, the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and its agencies, students and alumni, Development partners, CCARDESA and other Sub - Regional Organizations (SROs), other key players in the AKIS in Africa and beyond , Private sector and Farmer Organizations, among others.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

1. The imperatives for positioning African universities and the higher education sector to effectively influence development processes on the continent and actions agreed upon.
2. Processes and mechanisms for the intensification and integration of African universities into national development processes as equal opportunity actors as well as the imperatives, gaps, and opportunities identified and the actions agreed upon.
3. AGM training events formally launched to strengthen capacity for research.



PROGRAMME July 31st, 2025 from 1400 hrs. – 1600 hrs, Botswana Time (GMT + 2)

Director of Ceremony: Mr. Mmoloki Edward Raletobana, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Corporate Services Ministry of Higher Education.

Time (CAT)	Activity	Speaker / Responsible
12:30-13:20	Arrivals and setting-in	Mr Thabo Nkala DVC F&A
13:30-14:00	Log-in and video of RUFORUM moving forward Video	Evaline Acan/David Amitu
14:00-14:05	Introductory statement - House-keeping issues and setting the scene	Prof. Samodimo Ngwako, LoC Chairperson
14:05-14:10	Welcome remarks from RUFORUM Executive Secretary	Prof. Patrick Okori, RUFORUM Executive Secretary
14:10-14:15	Remarks from the RUFORUM Board Chair	Prof. Theresia Nkua-Akenji, Vice Chancellor, University of Bamenda
14:15-14:25	Remarks by the VC Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources	Prof. Ketlhatlogile Mosepele, Vice Chancellor, BUAN
14:25-14:30	Remarks by the Executive Director of the Centre for Coordination of Agricultural Research and Development for Southern Africa (CCARDESA)	Prof. Cliff Sibusiso Dlamini Executive Director, CCARDESA
14:25-14:30	Introducing the Guest of Honor	Prof. Ketlhatlogile Mosepele, Vice Chancellor, BUAN
14:30-14:50	Official opening address by the Ministry of Higher Education (MHE)	Hon Prince Maele Minister MHE
14:50-15:10	<p>Key Note Address</p> <p>Strategically aligning Africa's universities and the higher education sector to significantly influence developmental trajectories of Botswana and the continent through innovations, science, technology and policy.</p>	Prof. Nelson Torto, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Higher Education Botswana
15:10-40:00	<p>Moderated Panel Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Botswana University of Agriculture and Natural Resources: Prof. Cecil Patrick University of Botswana: Prof. David Norris, Vice Chancellor Botswana International University of Science and Technology: Prof. Otlogetswe Totolo, Vice Chancellor 	<p>Moderator Prof. Justin H. Chepete</p> <p>Rapporteur Dr Freddy Manyeula Dr. Christinah Matsuane</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Agricultural Research and Development Institute (NARDI) Prof. Julius Athlopheng • Green Africa Youth Organization (GAYO), Botswana: Tebogo Cleopatra Bahiti, Youth Engagement & Climate Officer 	
15:40-15:50	Facilitated Open Dialogue	Moderator Prof. Justin H. Chepete
15:50-15:55	Wrap up	Prof. Joyce Lepetu
15:55-16:00	Closing Remarks	Prof. Samodimo Ngwako