



22nd RUFORUM ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THEME: Translating higher agricultural education innovation and research into actions for Africa's agriculture transformation and development

Pre-conference events: November 23rd– 29th 2026,

Main conference events: November 30th – December 4th 2026

Venue: Avani Hotel, Livingstone, Zambia

Call for Expression of Interest to hold Side Event Meetings

1. Introduction

In October 2025, the African Union launched the Decade for Accelerated Action for the Transformation of Education and Skills in Africa (2025-2034). This strategic document along with the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Program (CAADP-Kampala Declaration 2026-2035) are essential for unlocking opportunity for Africa's young population, and its agriculture sector in the journey to achieving Agenda 2063, the Africa We Want. Among the outcomes of RUFORUM's 21st Annual General Meeting (AGM), African universities pledged to intensify their efforts to transform higher education, engage science, technology and innovation, leverage their capabilities (intellectual and physical infrastructure, as well as their social capital) to underpin production of graduates and science solutions for Africa's development in the 21st century. These ambitions must be strategically executed to underpin:

1. Transformative education whose content and delivery is contextual, relevant, digitally enabled, and aligned with labour market needs;
2. Reforms that accelerate the transition toward 4th-generation universities, which integrate teaching, research, innovation, entrepreneurship, and community impact;
3. Accelerate impact of artificial intelligence, robotics, and digital tools on the world of work and integrate digital literacy, data science, and emerging technologies into teaching and research; and,
4. Actions that support and growth and transformation of agriculture, Africa's most strategic sector to unlock widespread development opportunity for the continent.

During the upcoming 22nd RUFORUM Annual General Meeting (AGM) in December 2026, African universities will meet to assess and draw lessons from recent efforts that aim to produce relevant human capital and science solutions for the continent.

2. The themes of the 22nd Annual General Meeting

The main theme of the 22nd Annual General Meeting, is ***Translating higher agricultural education innovation and research into actions for Africa's agriculture transformation and development.***





Sub-theme 1: Enhancing Africa's Human Capital to Drive the Continent's Development

This sub-theme focuses on strengthening Africa's human capital as a foundation for sustainable socio-economic transformation. Discussions will examine employment trends, labour market transitions, and strategies for preparing graduates and young people for emerging opportunities in the world of work. Particular attention will be given to skilling approaches that align education and training systems with industry needs, technological change, and entrepreneurship. The sub-theme will also explore innovative pathways for improving employability, lifelong learning, and workforce adaptability to ensure that Africa's youth can contribute to national and continental development agendas.

Sub-theme 2: Building a Resilient and Productive Economy

This sub-theme will explore pathways for strengthening Africa's economies through resilient agrifood systems, digital transformation, and evidence-informed policy investments. Deliberations will highlight innovations that improve agricultural productivity, climate resilience, and food security while leveraging digital technologies to drive efficiency and inclusion. The sub-theme will also address mechanisms for generating wealth and expanding economic opportunities for young women and men, and agrarian communities. Emphasis will be placed on the use of data, research, and evidence to support strategic investments that promote inclusive growth, sustainable livelihoods, and economic resilience across the continent.

Sub-theme 3: Harnessing African Universities and Partner Opportunities for Mission Delivery

This sub-theme examines the role of African universities and strategic partnerships in advancing development and innovation. It will address resourcing for mission delivery through centres of excellence, leadership development, infrastructure investment, and institutional partnerships. Discussions will further explore strengthening Zambia's higher education sector to support national development priorities. The sub-theme will also focus on translating science into businesses and jobs through incubation, university-industry collaboration, and supportive policy environments. In addition, it will highlight innovations in teaching and learning, including learner-centred approaches, curriculum reform, technology-enabled education, and postgraduate training aimed at producing graduates equipped with 21st-century skills.

Sub-theme 4: Capacity sharing to train the next generation

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 harmonise 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.





3. Key events of the 22nd Annual General Meeting

The AGM will involve different convenings such as: Pre-AGM events that will include training sessions in: Zambia higher education day, student technology hackathons, advanced data management and analytics, among others; Conference activities include strategic partnership events, high level policy events, RUFORUM Governance meetings, scientific conference (oral and poster presentations), and exhibitions. Additionally, field visits will be held. recognition of outstanding achievers including young scientists, model farmers and young agripreneurs will be made.

4. Expected participants

The AGM event brings together academia and science leaders, policy makers (including ministers and technical experts), higher education leaders in Africa, development partners, private sector leaders, researchers, innovators, students, and farmer organizations, among others from Africa, the global south and global north. Approximately 600 participants are expected to attend the AGM.

5. Call for Expression of Interest to hold Pre-Conference or Side Meetings

RUFORUM invites interested institutions/organisations and individuals to hold pre-conference or side events¹ aligned to the overall conference theme and directly contributing to the achievement of the conference objectives. The pre-conference or side events should be contributing new knowledge or equipping Africans with new skills to address the challenges and seize opportunities in one or more sub-themes scientific sessions to contribute to Africa's development. Each event should therefore showcase or equip African agriculture and research ecosystem actors with novel knowledge and skills to innovate for Africa's development.

6. How to express interest to hold a Pre-conference and/or Side Event

Interested organisations/institutions/individuals should provide 1–3-page Concept Note of the proposed event. The Concept Note should include the following sections.

- a) Title of the event.
- b) Brief background including rationale and objectives.
- c) Event delivery approach and draft programme.
- d) Expected outcomes specifying new knowledge or competency that will be delivered to enable a specified actor in the higher agriculture and research ecosystem to address challenges and seize opportunities in one or more sub-themes scientific sessions to contribute to Africa's development.
- e) Target group of the pre-conference or side event.
- f) Number of participants.
- g) Sitting arrangements. See examples [here](#)
- h) Equipment required to hold the event (projectors, video conferencing equipment, Public Address System, Video coverage etc. required to hold a quality events)
- i) Branding and publicity materials to be brought and those required (flyers, pull-up stands, tear drops, LED Screens, Videos etc.)
- j) Dissemination plan including live media coverage platforms social media, live streaming on e.g., Facebook; twitter and YouTube if applicable, and

¹ A side event is a meeting, training, dialogue, or any other event that is not part of the RUFORUM Governance and mainstream scientific Conference by either members or non-members of the RUFORUM Network.





- k) Number and category of participants who will be funded by the side event organisers (excluding the organisers). The Program Committee requires that for an event to be accepted, **the organisers should cover the travel, registration, and accommodation costs of at least five (5) participants preferably Principals and Deans from outside Zambia to the meeting excluding the event organisers.**

7. Side event dates and duration

The preconference events will take place between 23rd – 29th November 2026. Events taking place in this period can run for a period of one to five days between 8:30am and 4:30pm CAT. During the AGM, side events may be organised on a day that will be specified in the programme. The day allocated for side events will be shared with organisations which will have expressed interest to host side events. Events taking place during this day must take place for only one day between 8:30am and 4:30pm CAT.

8. Reporting for Side Events

To ensure coherence in reporting of the overall conference, all side event's organisers will prepare a summary report of their events as a contribution to the broader conference report, a day after holding the session. A report of a maximum three (3) pages should specify the following.

- a) Objectives of the Side Event.
- b) The sub-theme that the Side Event is contributing to.
- c) The success stories/best practices shared/new skills or competency delivered.
- d) Challenges and opportunities identified.
- e) Practical recommendations, and,
- f) Action plan to implement the recommendations specifying the role of different stakeholders.

9. Side events funding arrangements

The side event conveners/ organisers will pay for all costs related to the holding of the side event. The cost of holding side events include:

- a) Venue hire, which varies with the number of participants.
- b) Registration fees for the expected number of participants in the side event, and
- c) Video conferencing facilities (for blended events).

Please submit the concept note by email to Emmanuel Okalany at e.okalany@ruforum.org with a copy to LOC, p.njenga@ruforum.org; and agm@ruforum.org by **15th October 2026**. All submissions will be responded to by the side event coordinator, specifying the availability of space and conditions for holding the events.

Kindly note that slots for side events are on first come first serve basis!

