

Ministerial Communiqué on Regional Cooperation on Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa, 23 October 2018, Nairobi, Kenya

Background

The Government of the Republic of Kenya together with the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), hosted a meeting of African ministers, senior officials responsible for education, agriculture, science and technology, representatives of Regional Economic Communities and Vice Chancellors of African Universities to agree on strategies to enhance African regional cooperation for strengthening higher education, science, technology and innovation in Africa. The focus of the meeting was to explore how higher education in Africa could be strengthened, with emphasis on regional mechanisms, to improve science, technology and innovation to meet the objectives and vision of the Sustainable Development Goals and the African Agenda 2063.

The objectives of the meeting were to:

1. Provide a platform for countries to dialogue on the needed transformation of national and regional higher education systems in Africa to support STI growth and national economic development;
2. Update on progress in implementation of decisions taken at the Cape Town Ministerial Meeting on Higher Education, Science and Technology in 2016;
3. Discuss regional capacity building partnerships in higher education and agree on a Charter for the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM); and,
4. Discuss potential implementation strategies at the sub-regional level with Regional Economic Communities to scale successful pilots.

We, the Ministers and Senior Leaders of Higher Education, Science and Technology assembled at the Ministerial Consultative Meeting on Strengthening Regional Cooperation on Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa held at the University of Nairobi, Republic of Kenya, on 23 October 2018:

Noting that the core value of Education, Science and Technology as a formidable tool for achieving Agenda 2063, “the Africa We Want” of a people driven inclusive prosperity, peace and integration, and that quality education has been emphasized as a pre-requisite for economic and social development to advance Africa’s position in the global knowledge economy.

Highlight that women and girls represent half of the world’s population and therefore also half of its potential. Gender equality is an imperative, as the full participation of women in labour forces would add percentage points to most national growth rates and double digits in many cases.

Cognizant that Africa needs to produce significantly more PhDs who can contribute to the science and innovation agendas needed to promote development. Limited funding inhibits the development of more graduate programmes;

Recognising that there is urgent need for curriculum reform and skills development to combat graduate unemployment and as industry increasingly indicates that graduates do not have the skills that they are looking for. To overcome the situation, the quality of higher degree programmes and their relevance for Africa’s challenges must be addressed. Agricultural education will be critical to enhance the quality of employment and ensure inclusive growth.

Recalling Decision Assembly/AU/Dec.572 (XXV) whereby the Assembly committed to establishment of a team of ten Heads of State and Government as African champions of Education, Science and Technology and decision of their Inaugural meeting where the Republic of Malawi offered to host the first Education Summit of the committee of ten;

Recalling Further the strong commitment to “*enhance agriculture education, skills development and knowledge support*” expressed during the African Union Heads of State Summits in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea in June 2014, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in January 2015, and in Johannesburg, South Africa in June 2015;

RECOMMEND that the Kenyan Government presents the following for consideration and inclusion in the Declaration to be made by the Committee of Ten Heads of State championing Science, Technology and Innovation and subsequently in the Summit of African Heads of State and Government during the AU January-February 2019 Summit, the following:

1. **COMMIT** to building capacity and pursuing excellence in research, science, technology, and innovation in teaching and learning, research and scholarship, and public service for:

- a) provision of solutions to the development challenges and opportunities facing African peoples across the continent;
- b) pursuing national development through business, higher education and graduate employability.

2. **INCREASE** ‘academic mobility schemes’ and strengthen Centres of Excellence to enhance mobility, regional level training and enhance economies of scope and scale. We agree to increase investments in higher education to:

- a) facilitate development, promote stability, and enhance access and equity through funding and provision of infrastructure;
- b) provide ICTs as a tool for learning and continued lifelong engagement;
- c) Make use of Graduate Teaching Assistantship programs to attract, develop and retain excellent academic and technical staff to pursue relevant and provide high-quality research and teaching; and,
- d) Establish Research Chairs in African Universities to promote research excellence and addressing critical issues in Africa such as in the areas of Data Management, Nutrition, Soil and Water Management, and Foresight studies
- e) establish a common research fund for strengthening African science, technology and innovation in Africa.

3. **ACCELERATE** the harmonisation and adoption of qualifications’ accreditation frameworks and ranking system at national and regional levels for the achievement of greater compatibility and comparability, increasing the international competitiveness of the African institutions of higher education, and assuring the quality of educational provision against agreed benchmarks of excellence.

4. **Develop** a Plan to escalate postgraduate training and staffing in African universities with,

- a) an expanded Regional Academic Mobility Programme to promote partnership in the field of Higher Education in Africa and to increase access to quality graduate programmes in Africa
 - b) a regional initiative to Build Africa's Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Capacity (BASTIC)
 - c) A specific program to increase the pool of women scientists in Africa
5. **Engage** with the African Union and the Committee of Ten Heads of State Championing Education, Science and Technology to enable the mobility of students and scholars (including those in diaspora) across the continent by minimizing visa requirements or making the issuing of visas easier.
 6. Endorse the expansion and strengthening of postgraduate training in Agriculture, Science, Technology and Innovation through Africa's Agricultural Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (AHESTI) in alignment with AU educational frameworks.
 7. **Commit** to work through national mechanisms to legitimise the work of RUFORUM in the Member States through a Charter to be endorsed by the respective Governments in line with the Member States' established procedures.
 8. **Work** with partners to identify successful gender responsive initiatives and invest in their expansion to achieve gender parity in postgraduate education by 2030;
 9. **ENSURE** trans-disciplinary scholarship to produce "liberally educated, scientifically literate and professionally prepared, creative and entrepreneurial graduates with integrity and ethical human values".
 10. **INTENSIFY** cooperation amongst African universities, with our governments, development partners, and domestic and foreign private investors to align incoming funds and initiatives to support Africa's efforts to assure STI competencies and ownership for solving its own problems.

The following ministers were represented at the meeting:

1. Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, KENYA;
2. Minister of Education and Sports, UGANDA;
3. Minister of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, UGANDA
4. Minister of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, ANGOLA;
5. Minstre de L Enseignement Superieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, BENIN;
6. Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, BURUNDI;
7. Minstre de L Enseignement Superieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, COTE D IVOIRE;
8. Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, EGYPT;
9. Minister of Education, GHANA;
10. Minister of Education, LIBERIA;

11. Minister of Education and Training, LESOTHO;
12. Minister of Education, Science and Technology, MALAWI;
13. Minister of Education, MALI;
14. Minister of Education, RWANDA;
15. Minister of Science and Technology, Higher and Technical Vocational Education, MOZAMBIQUE;
16. Minister of Technical and Higher Education, SIERRA LEONE;
17. Minister of Higher Education and Training, SOUTH AFRICA;
18. Minister of Higher Education, Science and Technology, SOUTH SUDAN;
19. Minister of Higher Education, SUDAN; and
20. Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, ZIMBABWE.