

Goodwill Message from Prof. Adipala Ekwamu, Executive Secretary RUFORUM to the Association of African Universities (AAU) on occasion of the Inauguration of the East African Regional Office in Khartoum, Sudan

On behalf of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture RUFORUM, I would like to thank Prof. Etienne Ehouan Ehile, The Secretary General of the Association of African Universities (AAU) for your generous invitation to this occasion

Secondly I would like to congratulate the AAU for its many achievements over the past 50 years.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Since the creation of the AAU in 1967, there has been a rapid increase in the rate of technological advancement which has created profound changes in workforce demands and economic realities. There has also been a significant increase in the number of universities across the continent calling for pragmatic approaches to foster collaboration across the continent. The Association of African Universities has responded to these changes and adapted to meet the needs of its members, helped to find solutions to many of these new challenges by providing a platform for research, reflection, Consultation, debate, cooperation and collaboration.

The Association has also provided leadership in the identification of emerging issues and support for debating them and facilitating appropriate follow-up action by its members, partners and other stakeholders. I congratulate all members of the Association of African Universities for the pivotal role that each of them have played in the success of the organization. Indeed members have developed open and trusting relationships based on mutual respect and common interests. I truly believe that that these relationships are a key reason for AAU longevity and its success.

Ladies and Gentlemen

By 2050, Africa's population will cross the 2 billion mark, the majority of whom will be young and by 2025 a quarter of all young persons under 25 in the world will be African. This is our greatest capital and they must be appropriately empowered into the intellectual capital that Africa needs, with relevant skills, especially in Science, Technology and Innovation.

In addition we must also include Women who make up more than half of the African population and also form over 70% of the agricultural workforce. As we pursue our ambitious goal of building shared prosperity, we must do this by developing the full potential of women. We must implement deliberate strategies to ensure girls' access to basic education; to higher education including science, technology, research and innovation; and increasing the number of women in academia and research. As part of our efforts in this direction, in 2017, together with other partners, we launched the Forum for African Women Vice Chancellors, where Professor Mabel Imbuga, the current Vice Chancellor of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, is the Chairperson of the Forum.

In addressing all these issues, I see the AAU playing a very important role.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Africa must invest much more in education, science, research and technology to meet its own development targets, and claim its stake in the world and knowledge economy. It must also strengthen collaboration between universities and industry; and accelerate intra-African research and scientific cooperation. These are the core thrusts of the RUFORUM Vision 2030 Strategy: **The African Universities' Agenda for Agricultural Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation - AHESTI**. We seek support from the AAU and national, regional and global partners, but more so African Governments, to help us achieve the Vision and strengthen the contribution of African Universities to the attainment of Agenda 2063. We must break the barriers across our continent, build a sense of belief and responsibility among our new generation for the future of our continent. Clearly education and universities are a key vehicle for achieving this dream. So as Universities and higher education networks, we must forge greater partnership and alliances to support the aspiration of our people: *The Africa We Want*.

Today is a landmark event for AAU, Sudan and all of us. I commend the AAU for taking the steps to increase its presence in the various regions in the continent. I also congratulate Sudan Government for allowing the hosting of the regional office in Sudan, more specifically at the University of Khartoum. My humble request especially to the Government of Sudan is to continue supporting the AAU Regional Office and indeed AAU endeavours.

Let me take this opportunity to inform you that RUFORUM will be hosting the Sixth African Higher Education Week and RUFORUM Biennial Conference, the week of 22-26 October 2018 in Nairobi, Kenya. The theme of the Conference is ***Aligning African Universities to accelerate attainment of Africa Agenda 2063***. I take this opportunity to invite AAU and its membership, and other actors to join us for the event in Nairobi. I also take this opportunity to inform you that RUFORUM will hold its Annual Convening for 2019 in Accra, Ghana; the 2020 convening here in Khartoum, the 2021 Seventh African Higher Education Week in the Republic of Benin, and the 2022 convening in Morocco. We invite all of you to these events.

I wish AAU and its member Universities a productive and prosperous future and I, and the RUFORUM Network look forward to working closely with you to achieve our shared goals. Long live AAU.

14 March 2018, Khartoum, Sudan