

WELCOME REMARKS

BY

**PROFESSOR VENANSIUS BARYAMUREEBA VICE-CHANCELLOR,
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY ON THE OCCASION OF THE OPENING
OF RUFORUM SECOND BIENNIAL CONFERENCE**

IMPERIAL RESORT BEACH HOTEL ENTEBBE

Monday 20TH SEPTEMBER 2010

8:30am

- The Minister of Education and Sports, Hon. Geraldine Namirembe Bitamazire
- Representative of the African Union
- Representative of the African Forum for Agricultural Advisory Services
- Deputy Executive Secretary, Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa
- The RUFORUM Executive Secretary
- Distinguished Colleagues from our various Universities
- Ladies and Gentlemen:

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- 1.0 Distinguished participants, allow me to welcome the Honourable Minister of Education and Sports for accepting to come and open this conference. We most sincerely thank you Honourable Minister for committing your time to this conference. To us, it is a sign of high policy commitment that your Ministry and you personally attach to Education in this country.
- 2.0 On behalf of the RUFORUM Board and Makerere University and our partners in this conference, I warmly welcome all the participants to this Second Biennial conference. We are pleased to see all of you, and are excited of what we expect will be a productive meeting. As the Host we have been preparing for this meeting since we were nominated to organize this event which marks six (6) years of the existence of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM).
- 3.0 Honorable Minister and distinguished participants, let me take this opportunity to highlight some of the major milestones that RUFORUM our organization of 25 African Universities has achieved since 2004.

- We are now fully registered as an International Non Governmental Organization that paves way for receiving more international support. This will also increase the scope and scale of our operations in the region.
- We have expanded our geographical coverage from the initial 10 Universities to now 25 Universities in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa.
- We have expanded the scope of operations to include pioneer-course work and thesis based PhD programmes in the region. Today we have five (5) PhD programmes based at Makerere University-Uganda; University of Nairobi, Kenya; at Sokoine University of Agriculture in Tanzania; and at University of Malawi in Malawi. Shortly, Makerere University in collaboration with other universities will be launching another PhD programme to build capacity to support agricultural extension.
- We have also developed mechanism for rationalized resource use in training with pioneer regional Masters degree programmes based at Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology in Kenya, Kenyatta University in Kenya, Egerton University in Kenya, and University of Zambia in Zambia, and University of Zimbabwe.
- RUFORUM has been working with Universities to reorient themselves to engage in Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP).
- This will enhance our development relevance as universities, and link more to Africa-wide policy frameworks.
- RUFORUM has also expanded the portfolio of support activities to its member universities. A new research support thrust that focuses on taking University led research outputs to communities collectively called “**Community Action Research Programme**” has been launched.
- RUFORUM has been assigned as the implementing arm of capacity development in the COMESA region.

- RUFORUM has trained 560 Masters degree holders and is currently training 80 PhD students for our region. By 2013, we will have trained close to 1,000 MSc graduates, and 150 PhD students to support the development process in our region.
- RUFORUM is partnering with regional organizations such as Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), African Forum on Agricultural Advisory Services (AFAS), and COMESA to increase engagement of African Universities in development practices and processes.

4.0 Honorable Minister and Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our partners who have enabled RUFORUM to realize these major achievements. These include: The Rockefeller Foundation, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Technical Center for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), International Development Research Center (IDRC), European Union, and Our Governments.

5.0 I wish all the participants in this *RUFORUM Second Biennial Conference* a lively exchange of ideas regarding how best to stimulate a science and technology led growth of the agriculture sector in our countries and region. Our plan is that the knowledge shared and generated from this conference will become the basis for synthesizing key policy issues that will serve as a useful and handy reference material for policymakers and students of development in our countries and region. I wish you all a fruitful discussion.

6.0 It is now my honour to invite the Honourable Minister of Education and Sports to address us.