

Press Release



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Guardian Candle Burns Out: H.E. Kenneth Kaunda Laid a foundation for Higher Education in Zambia

Kampala - 18 June 2021, News filtering through from Zambia on the passing on of H.E. Kenneth Kaunda, comes at a difficult time for the world and Africa in general. It is not such a pleasant time to receive sad news of a life worth celebrating than mourning. For Africa and Zambia and the higher education fraternity, H.E. Kaunda's life is a symbol of progress that exemplifies growth, prosperity, determination and nation building on the foundation of human capacity, science, dignity and respect for one another.

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), a network of 129 universities from 38 African countries; three of which are from Zambia (University of Zambia, Mulungushi University, and Copperbelt University) celebrates the life and contribution of H.E. Kaunda to education, advancement of science, growth of higher education, pan-Africanism and de-colonisation of the continent. He made his mark from the early times in 1964 when he took up office when Zambia's literacy levels were at 0.5% of the country's population. His policy decisions were instrumental in getting children to school, keeping them in school and growing a population of literate but dream achievers in Zambia and Africa.

Remarkably, H.E. Kaunda laid the foundation for higher education in Zambia through the founding of University of Zambia in 1966 that later nurtured other universities and tertiary education institutions in Zambia. Through these steps, he started on the course of democratizing access to education, especially higher education in Zambia and reducing dependence on out of the country and out of Africa search for higher education. University of Zambia today has remained a remarkable institution training not only for Zambia but for Africa as a whole.

Through his focus on humanism ideology, H.E. Kaunda embodied African long-term and generational Ubuntu ideology. And because of this, many persons from other parts of Africa received opportunity to undertake higher education studies in Zambia with the direct support of the Government of Zambia.

Today, RUFORUM continues to call on African Governments to increase investment in higher education, invest in African regional mobility that is able to strengthen African ties and cooperation in science and innovation, invest in opportunities that help post-conflict countries to strengthen their education systems through human capital development and create various centers of excellence across the continent that continue to ensure that African progress continues to be grown and nurtured. It is only through these efforts that Africa can continue to celebrate the life of the founding fathers of our countries and advance our aspirations of a fully

liberated Africa. We must stand firm against any form of neo-colonialism, whether from outside or from within the continent.

RUFORUM network extends its condolences to the people of Zambia and to its network universities and Africa at large but remains hopeful that the vision of H.E. Kaunda continues to live on and grow. His guardian candle may have burnt out but the foundation he laid for education and higher education in Zambia was a firm one. RUFORUM pledges to continue to nurture a new generation of African scholars and graduates who know our continent better, believe in our continent, work across linguistic and cultural barriers and aspire for prosperity and harmony in our continent. Fare thee well Kenneth Kaunda!

Note to Editors

About RUFORUM:

The Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM) is a consortium of 129 African universities operating in 38 countries on the continent with a mission to ‘strengthen the capacities of Universities to foster innovations responsive to demands of smallholder farmers through the training of high quality researchers, the output of impact oriented research and the maintenance of collaborative working relations among researchers, farmers, national agricultural research institutions’. RUFORUM was established by Vice Chancellors in 2004 with a Secretariat hosted at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda. In 2014 RUFORUM signed a MoU with the African Union Commission to support implementation of the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024) Priority One on reducing poverty and ensuring food and nutrition security. RUFORUM has supported the training of 1958 MSc and 536 PhD graduates, of whom 98% work in their countries or region, the generation of over 300 agricultural technologies and mobilized over US\$214.9 million for strengthening postgraduate education in Africa. Please visit www.ruforum.org for more information.

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