



Speech by
Prof. Mabel Imbuga, Ph.D., EBS
Vice Chancellor
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
During the
Official Launch of the International Conference on Higher Education in
Eastern Africa (ICHEEA)
On
4th August 2011

The Minister for Higher Education, Science & Technology Hon. Prof. Hellen Sambili

The Pro-Chancellor of Mount Kenya University Prof. George Eshiwani

The Vice Chancellor of Mount Kenya University Prof. Stanley Waudu

Deputy Vice Chancellors from both Institutions here present

Members of the Organising Committee

Representatives of the private sector

Members of the Fourth Estate

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a privilege and honour to have the Honourable Minister, Ministry for Higher Education, Science and Technology, Prof. Hellen Sambili, grace today's occasion. We are also honoured to have our invited guests with us today. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Chairman, Prof. George Eshiwani, and members of the Steering Committee, the DVC (RPE), Prof. Esther Kahangi and members of the Conference Secretariat for planning and organizing today's ceremony.

Ladies and gentlemen, the idea of hosting a conference on higher education in the Eastern Africa Region is an idea whose time has arrived. In this regard, I take this first opportunity to congratulate Professor George Eshiwani, Pro-Chancellor MKU for having taken the initiative towards making this idea a reality. Rapid growth has been witnessed in the development of higher education and institutions in the public and private sectors within the Eastern Africa region. This growth poses a number of challenges in the provision, administration and management of higher education within the national states in the region. The higher education sector has many different stakeholders with broadly similar objectives but without a platform for discourse to synergize efforts in addressing the emerging challenges and opportunities in the sector. The conference will provide a much needed platform on which stakeholders come together to discuss and seek the way forward in addressing the common challenges and opportunities in the higher education sector.

The stakeholders within higher education sector include the following cadres:

University administration officials (VC, DVCs, Deans of Faculties, & Schools, etc); donors and funding agencies & institutions as represented by governments ministries of higher education, science & technologies; Commissions of higher education, higher education loans boards, donor bodies including the Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, DFID-UK, DAAD, SIDA, CIDA, World Bank, local banks, amongst others. There are stakeholders within industry such as those in breweries, tea, coffee, sugar, dairy, metallurgy sectors. We also have the higher education products namely the students.

Indeed, it is only by hosting such a conference as proposed by ICHEEA that will make it possible to bring together all stakeholders in the higher education sector within the region to address their common challenges and chart the way forward.

Ladies and gentlemen, a note with appreciation the progress made by Prof Eshiwani and his organizing Committee towards this noble cause. First was the identification of members of the steering committee in which JKUAT was ably represented by our DVC RPE, Prof Esther Kahangi. The steering Committee is backed by a secretariat team in which a number of our staff has ably continued to contribute their time and effort. As a University, Madam Minister, we are glad that our partners at Mount Kenya take advantage and benefit from the vast experience our members have in organizing such academic conferences at this level. Indeed the conference organizing team has identified the theme for conference: ***'STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN EASTERN AFRICA REGION IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES'***. This theme does reflect on the pertinent issues that cut across the higher education sector within the region. I note with satisfaction that the conference will be held in separate symposia where the theme will be addressed in the following appropriate sub-themes targeting different cadres among the stakeholders, including:

Sub-theme 1: ‘The challenges and opportunities of using technology to improve Higher Education in Eastern Africa’ under which participants will be able to tackle topics on

- The use of technology in Globalization of Higher Education
- Change and Management of Higher Education in Eastern Africa
- Access to Higher Education and pursuit of academic excellence
- Higher education for the public good – the debate of Public Universities Vs Private Universities in Eastern Africa
- The decline of the academic guru: Will Technology replace the Professor?
- The Open University in Eastern Africa: The Challenges for the future
- Gender and Technology: A challenge to universities in Africa

Sub-Theme 2: ‘Universities contribution to sustainable National Development through Research’ in which the following contemporary topics will be addressed:

- Food production
- Food security
- HIV AIDS
- Malaria
- Child Mortality
- Conflict Resolution in Planning and Management of Resources
- Innovations for mitigating disasters and alleviation of poverty
- Leadership, Conflicts and Development in Africa
- Infrastructure Planning and Development
- Industrial Development

Sub-Theme 3: ‘The Management of an African University in modern Times’ to debate the following key topics:

- Management of a private university in Eastern Africa
- Why some leaders cant lead – the challenges facing the Vice chancellor of a Public University in Africa
- Examinations and Graduations at East African Universities: Challenges for a rethink
- A paradigm shift in University Management from the western mode
- The mission of the University with a dysfunctional society
- The relevance of university curricula to national needs
- Mushrooming of institutions of higher learning in the name of universities
- Student mitigation in East Africa and abroad

Sub-Theme 4: ‘The cost of higher education in Eastern Africa’ to bring to public knowledge the following important issues:

- How much does it cost to educate a University Student in Eastern Africa in Public Universities and Private Universities
- Financing of Higher Education in Easter Africa
- Students loan program in Eastern Africa
- Estimating student unit cost and staffing requirement for various university degree programs
- Returns on investment in university education in Eastern Africa
- Generating supplementary sources of income by Universities in Eastern Africa – The case of parallel degree programs

- The financial decline of the academic guru in Eastern Africa: A rethink of salaries paid to Professors
- Student loan options from the Banking Industry

As we can all witness, this conference will address many issues that continue to challenge the growth and progress of higher education in the region. Indeed, the success of this conference will be an excellent example of the vision of all our citizens wanting to work together as a region.

Honourable Minister, may I also take this opportunity to thank Mount Kenya University for availing space and resources to host the secretariat. Indeed, I am aware the organizing Committee under the Chairmanship of the Pro-Chancellor, Prof Eshiwani has drawn up a sizeable budget for hosting the conference. I am confident that the team will deliver on their targets.

Madam Minister, the two institutions have come together, negotiated and drafted an MOU which is to be signed this morning as part of the conference preparation launch by the respective chief executives. We at JKUAT will endeavour to keep to the letter and spirit of this MOU.

Honourable Minister, finally, we are thankful to the Government of the Republic of Kenya for providing an enabling environment for private investment in education. Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture & Technology is a major beneficiary of the enabling environment.

I thank you all for your attention.