



Address

by

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during

Meeting of Beneficiaries of Babaroa Awards Scheme

Saturday December 10, 2011

Panafric Hotel

Nairobi

Deputy Vice Chancellors,
Our Alumni and Beneficiaries of the Babaroa Award Scheme,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to stand before you at this rare and yet important encounter with our former students and beneficiaries of the Babaroa Award scheme. Ordinarily, we should be meeting you as part of JKUAT extended alumni association but as you are aware, you belong to the very unique JKUAT fraternity that has benefited from the Babaroa Trust Fund.

Furthermore, the Babaroa Prizes have over the years been won on the basis of academic excellence; a fact that also puts you on an exclusive union. Besides, the Prizes that you have won have a great history close to the development and establishment of JKUAT through a bilateral technical agreement between the governments of Kenya and Japan. We are

therefore gathered here today to discuss how to transform the Babaroa Trust Fund that is coming to an end next year after 15 years of existence. For those of you who may not be aware of the history of the Babaroa Trust Fund, I will provide a very brief history.

The establishment of the Babaroa Trust Fund in 1996 to honour excelling students in selected Departments is closely linked to the Japanese scholars who participated in the establishment and development of Jomo Kenyatta College of Agriculture and Technology (JKCAT). One such academic, who over the years led the Japanese team of scholars to Kenya for consultative and evaluation forums with the Kenyan authorities is Prof Hiroji Nakagawa. It was as a result of the recommendations of the Japanese team that initially led to the successful establishment of JKCAT, the precursor of JKUAT – your *alma mater*.

Prof. Nakagawa continued heading subsequent Japanese consultants to JKUAT throughout the implementation period of the Technical Cooperation Agreement between the governments of Japan and Kenya. It is Nakagawa's missions which paved way for the JKUAT funding over the years until the dawn of this millennium when the JKUAT project was fully handed over to the Kenyan Government.

Before the end of the collaboration, Prof. Nakagawa assembled over 180 Japanese nationals involved in the JKUAT/JICA project to give birth to the JKUAT/Babaroa Trust Fund and all of you are our proud beneficiaries of the fund. The Trust's main focus is to promote academic excellence at the University through an annual token of appreciation to academically outstanding students. Under the Chairmanship of Prof. Nakagawa, the fund was launched with an initial sum of Kshs.5 million raised by the JKUAT/JICA team in Japan. The prizes have for the years been paid

through the interest accruing from the initial deposits. Beneficiaries receive a cash award of Shs. 10,000, a trophy, and a certificate.

For the last fourteen years of its implementation, the Babaroa Trust Fund has disbursed a total of Shs. 5 million to close to 500 bright students, and majority of you are our alumni who are serving the country and the world in various capacities. You will appreciate that some of these Japanese nationals are now at their twilight years and therefore unlikely to continue supporting the initiative. Consequently, the Japanese founders of the Trust Fund have announced they will not be able to support the initiative after next year. Indeed the founders and pioneers of the fund will join us next year to hand over the concept to us.

Obviously, it is hard for us in JKUAT to let go something that has become part of our practice. It is my view that Babaroa Trust Fund that has become part of our history should be continued under a new framework.

As a University, we are determined to maintain the Babaroa concept as a way of acknowledging the essential role played by founding Japanese officials in the establishment of our institution. It is a history that cannot simply be terminated.

And this brings me to the purpose of today's meeting. We have called you to this brainstorming ceremony to get your views on how to proceed after next year. On our part as a university, I am glad to announce that we have already initiated an endowment fund through the establishment of Shs. 5 million seed money that we have deposited into a fixed account as part of our strategy to support the scheme after next year.

It is our conviction that you will be able to come up with practical solution that will enable us to motivate our students and cherish the patriotic gesture and participation of the Japanese people in the development of

our welfare. After all you are our best that JKUAT has produced and I believe that your current success has been partly influenced by the Babaroa Prize that you had won while at JKUAT. You are the elite of JKUAT and I expect you to rise to the occasion and chip in through for instance annual subscriptions to ensure the Babaroa Trust Fund does not die. I dare say that it is now your turn to give back to the society. Surely, an Award in which you are pioneers should simply not die.

I now open the floor for discussions and way forward.

I thank you most sincerely for listening to me.