



Welcoming Statement
by
Prof. Mabel Imbuga PhD, EBS
Vice Chancellor
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
during
official opening ceremony
Strengthening Higher Education Stakeholder Relations in Africa (SHESRA)
Tuesday November 29, 2011
Kenya School of Monetary Studies

Hon. Dr. Kilemi Mwiria, our Guest of Honour and Assistant Minister of Higher Education,
Science and Technology

Prof. George Magoha, AAU Acting President and Vice Chancellor, University of Nairobi

Representative from the Canadian Embassy in Nairobi

Representatives from AAU

Representatives from AUCC

Vice Chancellors

Professors, Deans, Heads of Faculties and Departments

Members of the Strengthening Higher Education Stakeholder Relations in Africa (SHESRA)

Steering committee and Local Organizing Committee

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great privilege and honour for me on behalf of the entire university communities in
Kenya and the east African region to welcome to this forum staged to promote greater

participation of researchers in Africa to applied research through innovative planning and increased partnership with industry. We at JKUAT are equally delighted to have teamed up with the Association of African Universities (AAU) and the Association of Canadian Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) to host this workshop.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this workshop that has been planned to run for two days has brought together 61 participants drawn from a total of 30 universities, 15 of them from Africa and an equal number of universities from Canada. I am pleased to note that Africa with 37 participants drawn from 13 sub-Saharan countries, AAU and Kenya's Commission for Higher Education has the lions share in this workshop. On the other hand Canada is represented by 24 participants drawn from the country's universities and the AUCC.

It is from this appropriate mix of different nationalities drawn from a variety of academic backgrounds that will attempt to address a number of challenges that continue to plague efficient utilization of higher education in Africa. It is my firm belief that the workshop's triple objectives that seeks to strengthen African University outreach programmes, promote University –Industry partnership in Africa and support the AAU member stakeholder relations will be key in showcasing the university's central role in Africa's development agenda.

The Africa-Canada universities twinning programme intends to achieve its goals by strengthening the planning process with the ultimate aim of transforming Africa's universities to be more research oriented through increased linkages with industry. The project that was negotiated by the AAU and funded by the Canadian aid agency CIDA, sought proposals last year from interested universities in Africa and Canada that were then subjected to a competitive evaluation. The winning 15 proposals representing 15 universities from Africa were selected and twinned to work with their counterpart universities in Canada. The fifteen Africa-Canadian pair of universities have since last year been developing their strategic plans and these are the universities that are now assembled here for this workshop to review their progress.

From Kenya three universities JKUAT, University of Nairobi, and Masinde Muliro Universities are participating in the project. For us at the JKAUT who are twinned to the University of Western Ontario, the project came at an opportune time when our current Strategic Plan 2009 -2012 is coming to an end and when we are in the process of developing the 2013 -2017 plan. The twinning project has therefore served to boost our capacity to develop our next Strategic Plan to transform JKUAT into a more research oriented university with strong industry linkages. Furthermore, we have also been working with the University of Western Ontario under the same programme to develop a case study on University-Industry linkage.

Clearly, we at JKUAT found the twinning project very close to our mission in which we are determined to make JKUAT *a university of global excellence in Training, Research, and Innovation for development*. It is a mission that we have been pursuing for years with remarkable success. The very foundation of our institution in 1981 as a middle level college through a technical agreement cooperation between the governments of Japan and Kenya planted the initial international mission that JKUAT has come to fulfill. For 21 years, JICA supported us through the construction of teaching workshops and laboratories and the provision of modern teaching equipment as well as in staff training.

However, when JICA handed over JKUAT project to the Government of Kenya at the dawn of this century, we were left to plan on how to proceed on our own. Planning is therefore not new to us. We developed our first ten year 2004-2014 Strategic Plan that we aligned to the country's Economic Recovery Strategy (ERS) for employment and wealth creation. Few years down the line, the Government released the Vision 2030 development blueprint designed to move Kenya from the economic development periphery to the middle economic status by the year 2030. This development meant that we review our Strategic Plan to accommodate the Vision 2030 agenda; and our current four year Strategic Plan 2009 -2012 was a product of the new status.

In the area of training, research, and collaborations, JKUAT has made tremendous progress that has earned us a reputation not only in Kenya but throughout east Africa and the continent of Africa. With the transformation of the college into an autonomous university in

1994, JKUAT in collaboration with JICA mooted and established a number of unique technology transfer projects that soon gained importance in East and Central Africa region. One such successful technology transfer programme that we jointly launched with JICA in 1993 was the Regional Group Training Programme in which over 80 participants drawn from 14 countries in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa region annually assembled at JKUAT for a month long specific training on applied technologies for a ten year period aimed at enhancing the regions' economies. The programme notably tackled a number of challenges mainly in food analysis and post harvest losses, water analysis, and electronic engineering. The programme had a major impact in the promotion of modern technology in the participating countries.

Similarly, JKUAT has been instrumental in forging collaborations with regional universities and research institutions. One such collaboration that has tangible outcome was sealed between JKUAT and then Rwanda's Kigali Institute of Science and Technology (KIST) in the 1990's. In the agreement we offered our laboratories for use by students of KIST for their practical training in a number of programmes in agriculture and engineering. Indeed JKUAT was instrumental in assisting KIST to develop its curriculum in a number of programmes in engineering and food sciences that eventually saw the elevation of KIST to a university status.

In Nigeria's Kaduna Polytechnic, we have been running our Master of Science programme in Entrepreneurship for the last three years in an arrangement aimed at building capacity for the Polytechnic's staff. We have gone a notch higher and launched in Nigeria a PhD programme in the same discipline.

Similarly, our dons continue to excel in the enterprise of applied research where JKUAT has reported a number of accomplishments that have resulted in the production of a number of inventions that have also been patented. We have been at the forefront in organizing technology transfer training workshops targeting our majority vulnerable people mainly the youth and women to partake in small scale industrial production of our inventions. In pursuing this approach JKUAT is motivated by the desire to instill a culture of industrialization among the bulk of the poor in Kenya; who are often socialized and hooked

to focus on unproductive and treacherous trade referred to here in Kenya as *Jua Kali* and hawking. These *Jua Kali* activities have unfortunately left the lucrative occupation of industrial production to the elite.

The new status of JKUAT as host for the Pan Africa University; Institute of Basic Sciences, Technology and Innovation has certainly boosted our resolve to train leaders to urgently spearhead Africa's development. This new initiative truly marks the beginning for JKUAT to drive Africa's integration and development agenda which we are keen to undertake.

From this, you can all understand why we at JKUAT are passionate in supporting this workshop. It is a workshop that has come at an appropriate time when we are shifting our attention from a teaching university to a fully fledged research university ready to move Kenya from the periphery to the semi periphery status in terms of economic development. It is a role that we are truly enthusiastic to support.

I wish all the participants fruitful deliberations.

I thank you most sincerely for listening to me.