



OPENING REMARKS BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, STATE DEPARTMENT FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, DURING THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2022 FOR THE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES CHAIRPERSONS OF COUNCILS, VICE-CHANCELLORS AND PRINCIPALS ON 21ST SEPTEMBER, 2022 AT SAROVA WHITESANDS, MOMBASA

- **Principal Secretaries Present,**
- **Chairpersons of University Councils,**
- **Prof. Geoffrey Muluvi, Chair of VCs' Committee**
- **Chairperson, Inter-Public Universities Council Consultative Forum,**
- **CEOs of State Agencies and Private Organizations,**
- **The Vice-Chancellors of Public Universities,**
- **Principals of Constituent Colleges,**
- **Facilitators and Resource Persons,**
- **Invited guests,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

Good morning!

I am delighted to be part of this great Conference that brings together Chairpersons of Councils, Vice-Chancellors, Principals of Constituent Colleges and other key stakeholders in university education sector. I take this opportunity to recognize and appreciate Inter-Public Universities Council Consultative Forum and the Vice Chancellors Committee for tirelessly working towards the success of this International Annual Conference.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish to highlight some key aspects of Kenyan University Education reforms. The transformation of University Education is anchored on Article eleven (11) of Chapter two (2) of the Constitution of Kenya and the Social Pillar of Vision 2030 which lay a lot of emphasis on Science, Education, Training and

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR). It has been a priority programme under the National Development Implementation Technical Committee (NDITC). During the stakeholders' initiative meeting held at Kenya School of Government, it was concluded that indeed reforms are needed in:

- 1. Strengthening governance and management practices**
- 2. Enhancing access and equity**
- 3. Improving quality and relevance**
- 4. Ensuring Universities have sustainable financing**
- 5. Anchoring internationalization in the universities**
- 6. Firming collaborations and linkages**
- 7. Improving university security**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kenya hosts 225 full-time researchers per million inhabitants, which is much higher than neighbouring countries. Approximately 1 in 4 researchers are female (25.7%) which is below the average for Sub-Saharan Africa (31.3%). The overall picture is that Kenya has a strong and vibrant research base and has great potential for growth as a research and innovation hub in East Africa.

Although Kenya scores highly in four pillars namely market sophistication, business sophistication, knowledge and technology outputs and creative outputs, it still lags behind in other key areas such as institutions, human capital and research and infrastructure.

To consolidate gains made, Kenya needs to strongly focus on revamping University Education and setting up an independent and well-resourced Research Innovation and Technology (RIT) Sector. Kenya also needs to continuously address international commitments, which include the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA) 2024 and the African Development Agenda 2063.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The large number of young people entering the job market has implications on both the demand and supply sides of the labour market. Universities need quality human resource as well as teaching and research infrastructure. There are, however, fewer courses in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) in the universities hence low enrolment. This is due to:

- i. Costs associated with delivering STEM related programs are higher than those associated with delivering courses in the social sciences and humanities**
- ii. Some Universities do not have sufficiently qualified faculty with the capacity to teach STEM related programs of sufficient quality to meet recognized standards.**
- iii. Low number of students transitioning from secondary education with the skills and qualifications required for enrollment in STEM programs.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There are challenges that we need to address in order to reform our university education sector. These include;

- 1. Policy gaps**
- 2. Lack of Sustainable Financing**

3. Low University Research output and advisory serves in ST&I

Let me shed light on key areas of University education sector reforms:

1. Policy development

University Education Act 2012 as well Science, Technology and Innovation Act 2013 have served us well. However, due to changing dynamics there is need to review them. Some of the policy documents awaiting stakeholder review include:

- i. Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) Policy**
- ii. Strategy on National Research Infrastructure (ongoing)/National scientific policy**

- iii. Strategy on Science and Technology Parks**
- iv. Blue Print on a Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE)**
- v. Mechanism for establishing MoUs in Higher education and Research sector**
- vi. ST&I Incentive and reward framework**
- vii. Career guidance and counselling policy**

While we plan to have Stakeholders to interrogate these policies and related instruments, we have also lined up the following for development:

- i. National Strategy for Commercialization of Innovations**
- ii. Framework for Resource mobilization and utilization in ST&I**
- iii. Mechanism to attract and retain Human resource in ST&I**
- iv. Framework for managing Centres of Excellence**
- v. Science Attachees' Framework**

- vi. **University Education Internationalization Strategy**
- vii. **Leather Processing Technology Strategy**

2. Research Infrastructure

Key infrastructures attract best researchers from around the world and promote building bridges between national and research communities and scientific disciplines. For Kenyan research communities, infrastructures ought to be *centres of excellence* that provide the highest quality and most economical solution for their needs. The country needs to invest not only in research priorities, but also in ways in which funded buildings or equipment are used.

Kenya needs to invest not only in research priorities, but also in ways in which funded buildings or equipment are used: who will use them, under what conditions and for what purposes. We

need to avoid the traditional difficulties associated with higher-education and industry cooperation, where considerable number of research activities go on in the country and do not find their path to solution to public challenges. The investment must be viewed in a national, as well as an institutional context. Thus, issues of access, sharing and transparency, nationally and internationally, need to be addressed in the governance model, including access to existing national databases.

3. Collaboration and linkages

In the current age of the 4th Industrial Revolution and the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), countries all over the world are strategizing on how to enhance their collaborations and partnerships in order to achieve their national development

objectives and adhere to their international obligations. Kenyan public universities have numerous collaborations and linkages; locally and internationally.

Collaborations in the university academic field is important for producing competitive products and services. In collaborations, Universities benchmark, exchange ideas, human and other resources. On the other hand, Collaborations in research and innovation enhance ideas, generate new knowledge and increase creativity. Therefore, collaborations in research and innovation between academia, industry, government and the community are connecting the world in unprecedented ways for a way of life due to ground-breaking research, disruptive technologies and fast-paced development.

The following interventions have been proposed for leveraging on collaborations and linkages:

- i. Address challenges like inadequate policies, bureaucracy, outdated research infrastructure, stiff competition from other knowledge-based institutions, weak linkages to industry, weak research portfolios, differences in organizational culture, rules around intellectual property and the ability to achieve organizational thrust from innovation.**
- ii. Enhance collaborations in the Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) sector**
- iii. Enhance collaborations targeting quality university Graduates.**
- iv. Exploit funding opportunities for collaborations in the University education sector**

4. University Sustainable Financing

Current phenomenal growth in the Universities has witnessed increase in contingency liabilities and legal issues. As part of intervention, we need to:

- i. Streamline governance and management of Universities**
- ii. Engage a pool of relevant competent professional Lawyers to handle court litigations**
- iii. Adhere to Public Finance Management Act, 2015**
- iv. Undertake thorough internal audits as well as audit by external auditors and implement recommendations**
- v. Ensure that corporate social responsibility policies are developed and implemented**
- vi. Build capability of finance and budget officials**

To enhance revenue collection:

- i. Develop and implement a policy on raising resources from other avenues e.g. from competitive research and entrepreneurship grants, alumni associations, continuous education, community service and business investments**
- ii. Ensure revenue collection software is in place to manage revenue collection**
- iii. Ensure that outstanding University fees is collected before students sit for their examinations**
- iv. Universities to employ Revenue Collector staff to manage revenue collection**
- v. Encouraging the teaching and research staff to pursue consultancy and research projects**

Interventions for public debt management include:

- i. Setting priorities by identifying the activities which are crucial to achieving organizational objectives;**
- ii. Adopting new approaches to resource allocation and resource utilization;**
- iii. Establishing a better internal budgeting policy and creating cost awareness as a conscious routine in management**
- iv. Developing a Debt Management Strategy**

With these remarks, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my pleasure to officially open this Conference and hope that its final product in terms of recommendations will be implemented.

May God bless us all.