



Welcoming Address

By

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Vice Chancellor

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

During the 2nd JKUAT Open Day ceremony

Friday, September 9, 2011

At the Assembly Hall

The Guest of Honour, Mr Paul Wanyagah, CEO MediaMax,

Prospective Students, Industrialists, Investors

JKUAT staff

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I take this opportunity to welcome all our stakeholders to our second annual Open Day organized basically to showcase our activities as well as provide us an opportunity to interact with you.

As you may be aware a modern university like JKUAT has a number of functions. This includes teaching that is mainly accomplished through our Academic Division under a Deputy Vice Chancellor for academic affairs. It is probably the most accepted function of any university because it admits students who join the

university to pursue various academic programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. Most of the country's manpower resources are generated through this critical function.

Another function of a modern university is that of research which is devoted to the generation of new knowledge crucial in supporting the country's development agenda. Research has become the most important characteristic of a modern university to the extent that a university that does not create new knowledge soon finds itself irrelevant. All our research activities in JKUAT are managed through the Research, Production and Extension Division, also under a Deputy Vice Chancellor. It is this Division that has organized today's Open Day.

Ladies and Gentlemen, research too should lead to improved productivity of our industries and a modern university like JKUAT has to develop a strong tradition of spearheading research aimed at generating new products and services in support of our growing industries. The idea for JKUAT to invest in innovative research is motivated by the desire to promote growth and improvement in the productivity,

profitability, competitiveness and sustainability of our local small scale industries and transform agriculture into a modern commercially viable enterprise.

Research in the university is also supported by our culture in training and innovation that demands that all makes it mandatory for all staff and students to excel in innovation and creativity. Students are also required to undertake industrial attachment before they graduate which offers them the hands on experience but also provides an opportunity for our students to make early contacts with prospective employers. Industrial attachment has worked well to the advantage of our students who, compared to their colleagues from other public universities, remain most preferred.

Besides, we have been benchmarking most of our activities, a situation that has made the culture of excellence to take root in JKUAT. For example the ISO requirements that we have been implementing for the last few years has offered increased opportunities for our students and lecturers to deliver their obligations in terms of quality of services.

As a tradition, we also continue to benchmark our academic programmes to make them globally relevant by subjecting them to competitive accreditation by both local and international regulatory bodies. Our programmes for example in the School of Architecture and Building Sciences (SABS) have been accredited by relevant bodies such as the Commonwealth Association of Architects and the Board of Registration of Architects and Quantity Surveyors of Kenya. In our College of Engineering and Technology, traditional engineering programmes are accredited by the Engineering Registration Board of Kenya. A similar process is being followed to ensure all newly developed engineering programmes are accredited.

It is such accreditations that have attracted major international universities and organizations to increase their interest in collaborating with JKUAT. Indeed I am particularly pleased to announce that SABS is currently hosting 23 students and two of their lecturers from the prestigious Technical University of Munich of the Federal Republic of Germany. The foreign students, at JKUAT for a period of over five weeks, are currently teaming up with their JKUAT -SABS counterparts in the

construction worth Euro - € 50,000 skills training centre in Nairobi's Ruai area along Kangundo Road. The centre will offer vocational training to young people mainly from Nairobi's Mathare and other underprivileged areas unable to continue with higher education.

At the research level, which is among our key component of the university mandate, the University has been able to secure numerous grants that are competitively awarded to our researchers. Some of these research funds come from the government through for instance the National Council for Science and Technology while researchers themselves have attracted funds from other international organizations.

JKUAT puts emphasis on applied research that directly contributes to the country's development agenda. Obviously this is not to suggest that we remain passive to basic research. Each proposed research project is judged on its own merit. Some of the products that you have seen as you went through our exhibition stands testify to our commitment to move this country forward as spelt out in Vision 2030. We have for instance made major breakthroughs in a number of research portfolios that

have resulted in the patenting of a number of products particularly in the development of food, chemical, engineering, and agricultural products.

Unfortunately, our mandate as a university almost ends with innovation since we lack the infrastructure for mass production. Yet these innovations have the potential to transform the lives of our people

Ladies and Gentlemen, the University is keen to work closely with the industry to provide human capital and as well explore possible partnerships to advance our products and technologies for use by the consumers. It is with this in mind that we recently established University-Industry Liaison Office to among other functions steer the promotion of technology transfer and commercialization of the University inventions while at the same time maintaining a channel through which companies, research organizations and government could readily access knowledge generated by JKUAT researchers.

I wish to call upon our local entrepreneurs to take advantage of the available inventions, a number of which are ready for mass production and

commercialization. In doing this, you will be contributing to the country's industrialization and wealth creation agenda. After all there is no pride for our local entrepreneurs to promote foreign trade which only succeeds in creating jobs in foreign countries.

I thank you most sincerely for listening to me.