



Statement by

Prof. Mabel Imbuga PhD, EBS

Vice Chancellor

Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology

during

opening ceremony

Sexual Harassment and Disability Mainstreaming Committee Workshop

Wednesday November 23, 2011

AICAD

Our Guest of Honour, Ministry of Education Dr G. Wango

The Director Gender Office,

Deputy Vice Chancellors,

Principals,

Heads of Departments,

Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed my pleasure to welcome you all to this three day workshop on sexual harassment and disability that has been organized by our gender office. We expect that some of the recommendations that will come out of this forum will be used to inform policy that we intend to formulate to guide sexual harassment and disability activities within the university.

Ladies and Gentlemen, you will agree with me that sexual harassment is a subject that has been swept under the carpet over the years with majority of people shying away from engaging in any meaningful debate on the subject. This is despite the many conflicts associated with human degradation that continue to arise from sexual harassment. Some of us have remained mum on the subject based on the wrong notion that sexual harassment is taboo that cannot be freely discussed.

As management, we acknowledge the fact that there is a lot that we can do to prevent possible incidents of sexual harassment among the university community.

As part of our strategy to protect our employees and students from possible sexual harassment, we shall continue for instance to provide them with a safe working and learning environment that does not discriminate and is free of harassment. In addition, we shall continue to work with other stakeholders within the university to put in place strategies and plans aimed at minimizing sexual harassment incidents.

The other important subject that has been lined up for discussion during this workshop is the related question of disability. According to Kenya National Survey for Persons with Disabilities, over 4.6% of Kenyans (1.6 million people) experience some form of disability. The most common forms of disability in Kenya are

associated with chronic respiratory diseases, cancer, diabetes, malnutrition, HIV and AIDS, and injuries, such as those from road accidents and retrogressive cultural beliefs such as witchcraft. As a university, we obviously have our own share in terms of people with various disabilities. These are vulnerable groups who are often ignored and left to operate under considerable difficulties. I want to assure you of the university's commitment to weed out any existing discriminatory practices based on disability particularly within our academic and research undertakings. It is our intention as a university to ensure equal opportunity for people with disabilities is upheld in JKUAT.

Although we have previously considered for recruitment and admission into our academic programmes persons with disabilities, we nevertheless lack a guiding

policy to govern and promote operations of our people with disabilities in the university. Despite this we have continued to support the initiative through by for example providing basic services like parking bay and lamps at designated buildings for use by ours disabled fraternity. However, much remains to be done especially on communication, provision of lifts in our storey buildings and ensuring 5% recruitment of persons with disability. The policy under development shall ensure adherence of recommendations provided by the National Council for Persons with Disability (NCPWD).

It is my hope that by the end of this workshop, the two policy documents on disability mainstreaming and sexual harassment will be developed and launched without further delay.

I thank Dr Wongo Mnago from the Ministry Of Education and Dr. Murugami from Kenyatta University for finding time to join us in this noble course.

Ladies and Gentlemen it is now my pleasure to declare this workshop officially opened.

Thank you and god bless you all.