



Address by
Prof. Mabel Imbuga, PhD, EBS
Vice Chancellor,
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During
Official opening of
Applied Geoinformatics Society and Environment 2011 Conference
At AICAD
Monday, August 15, 2011

The Guest of Honour, Mr. Ali Mohammed - Permanent Secretary Ministry of Environment & Mineral Resources,

Director DAAD

DVC's

Prof Behr, Chair AGSE Conference Series

Principals,

MD, ESRI Eastern Africa

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel honoured to welcome you to Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT) for your 4th session of the Applied Geoinformatics Society and Environment (AGSE) conference series which is being held in Africa for the

first time. I pay tribute to the organisers of this forum for locating this conference at JKUAT, a decision that demonstrates the confidence that JKUAT is gaining in the global enterprise of scholarship and research.

Kenya as a country also takes pride in hosting a forum where leading researchers, academicians and industry players share their opinions, research findings and also challenge each other to inspire greater innovation and creativity in geospatial technologies.

I am informed that this conference that has brought together close to 120 participants drawn from a number of countries in Africa, Europe, USA, and Asia has lined up to 80 papers for presentation during the next five days. The papers will mainly focus on two all important subject areas namely - the environment and geospatial technologies. A glance at the conference proceedings brings to the fore not only the importance of environmental aspects, but the application of geospatial technologies as decision support tools.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Geospatial Information Systems (GIS) and remote sensing techniques hold the key to monitoring and analysing environmental phenomena to promote sustainable resource utilization. Geospatial technologies never cease to astound many at the rate at which they are pervading almost every sphere of society. It is common to have maps on the World Wide Web, manage assets or fleets through the same technologies, and apply the same in vehicle navigation, marketing analysis and suitability analysis for strategic location of facilities among other functions.

Kenya, like other developing countries, face the temptation of relegating environmental concerns to the periphery in favour of economic aspirations. The consequences of ignoring environmental issues are well documented particularly in

the industrial countries that have largely pursued economic interests with little regard to environmental consequences. These countries are now dogged with enormous environmental predicaments that are hard to reverse. As developing countries, we need to avoid the trap and fully take into account all environmental factors in our economic development programmes.

It is reassuring to note that the information and knowledge exchanged in this forum will help us make good decisions for our environment and consequently for our future generations. Case studies of environmental disasters are enough warning that Kenya risks losing its valuable resources and habitable environment unless concerted efforts and measures are exerted to ensure sustainable development. The diversity of professions represented in the audience is a testimony that a multi disciplinary, multi-faceted approach and finally closer home, multi technological approach would go a long way to achieving our development goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Our Department of Geomatic Engineering & Geo-spatial Information Systems that is hosting this conference was established 7 years ago, as a sub Department of Civil Engineering. The popularity of its undergraduate and postgraduate programs has seen its impact of the Department grow rapidly over the. In recent times, the department launched very popular postgraduate evening programmes in Environmental Information systems and GIS, targeting practising industry professionals.

In addition, the Department too has mounted short courses where the University is proactive in GIS technology transfer to a number of organizations in the country. Top on the list is the partnership with the police department where GEGIS helped institute the use of geospatial technologies. The impact was immediately

recognised countrywide, as the technology transfer lead to the police, cracking high level crime using GPS and GIS technology. The department is as well working closely with Gatanga Constituency in our neighbourhood where the Department has successfully managed to develop a water billing and management system for the Constituents. The project remains a testimony of JKUAT determination to disseminate technology to the local community.

Before concluding my remarks, I pay special tribute to Stuttgart University of Applied Sciences, Germany who have spearheaded this initiative to ensure that not only is the 4th Session of AGSE conference is held in Africa, but also for ensuring that in liaison with DAAD, all their Alumni, participants have been sponsored. JKUAT has also benefitted from our partnership with Stuttgart University as some of our members of staff obtained their higher degrees from Stuttgart University of Applied Sciences. I laud this partnership for the mutual benefit of both institutions. In this regard, allow me to thank Prof Behr and his team for their efforts.

I am grateful to the Department of Geomatic Engineering & Geo-spatial Information Systems, under the leadership of the local organising Committee Chairman, Dr Moses M Ngigi, for successfully coordinating this event. Equally, I appreciate the partnership between the industry in terms of sponsorship and participation. Allow me to appreciate ESRI Eastern Africa, Oakar services and other sponsors for their continued support to JKUAT. To all presenters, exhibitors, sponsors and participants, feel welcome and we hope your stay in JKUAT will be a most pleasant experience.

It is now my pleasant duty to invite Mr. Ali Mohammed - Permanent Secretary Ministry of Environment & Mineral Resources and our Guest of Honour, to give his address and officially open the conference.

I thank you most sincerely for listening to me.