

**NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE ON THE TANA RIVER
COUNTY
25-28 FEBRUARY, 2014
NORTH COAST BEACH HOTEL, MOMBASA**

OPENING REMARKS:

**THE ROLE OF RESEARCH AND EXTENSION ON COUNTY
DEVELOPMENT**

(Observe protocol)

- Director- General NEMA
 - Distinguished guests
 - Ladies and Gentlemen
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I am honoured to be at this conference (on behalf of the DVC (RPE, Prof. Lucy W. Irungu), on the impact of climate change on natural resources and human activities in Tana River County, which I hope will be a learning experience to all of us on how climate change and human activities impact on livelihoods and how best the phenomenon can be managed.

The University of Nairobi is a research intensive university with a reputation for excellence and a strong and vibrant research culture. It is our objective to ensure that our research, across all disciplines remains relevant by positively impacting the community and the region.

As we all know, research is the backbone to development, providing solutions to societal problems through the transfer of knowledge and technologies, interactions and reflection, thereby improving community livelihoods.

The UoN Research Policy (2013) recognises that the existing gaps that underlie the realization of the MDGs and the Kenya Vision 2030 cannot be adequately addressed without inputs of institutions of higher learning and research.

As such the University of Nairobi in its strategic direction to impact development through its research set up the Research, Production and Extension Division whose primary function is to provide strategic research direction and to manage the overall research performance as a core function of the University by maintaining and advancing the University's research profile, research training, technology transfer and commercialization of research outcomes.

This is in alignment with the Vision 2030 that recognises the role of research and development, science and technology and innovation in improving the economy and human development.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Kenya Vision 2030 vision can be achieved when there is a balance in the types of research in terms of prioritising societal problems, utilizing existing knowledge

on the societal problems, availing financial capacity to address the problems and building and availing the necessary critical mass.

Research and extension is therefore a function for the county governments as decision makers, the public as target population, industry as commercial partners and researchers as creators of the new knowledge.

A lot of research has been undertaken by Knowledge-Based Institutions (KBIs) in vast areas of specialisation. Such research findings are supposed to transform the lives of the citizens in a manner that is measurable.

However the main challenge is that benefits accrued from these research findings have not been utilized effectively for lack of working relations and effective structures for research to inform policy.

The Government of Kenya, by entrenching relevant policies, has shown strong commitment to the development of a knowledge economy that is informed by research. Policies like the Kenya Vision 2030 and the Science, Technology and Innovation Act of 2013 are examples of the government's commitment to improve livelihoods through knowledge and research.

These forward-looking policies envisage intensified application of science, technology and innovation to raise productivity and efficiency levels across the three pillars of the national economy. However, the benefits of such policies can only be realised with the establishment of a strong working relations between the research community, the government, development agencies and the citizens.

In addition, the citizens and the development and government agencies must stimulate, facilitate, demand and celebrate excellence in research to enhance utilisation of the new knowledge.

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 envisages national development to be attained through successful devolution of services to the grassroots. The nation will be successful in achieving its development goals when the counties successfully implement research and innovation for development. For instance, the Kenya Science, Technology and Innovation Act (2013) as well as the Kenya Vision 2030 set clear directions for strengthening research and knowledge creation. The Science, Technology and Innovation Act (2013) has also established research funding mechanisms to promote building of research capacity and quality across the country, envisaged to build more effective links with business and

external stakeholders with greater alignment with national development goals.

Ladies and gentlemen, with this platform, the goal of high quality research underpinning knowledge creation and technology transfer at the county level is within our reach.

Together with tertiary and research institutions the government can promote relevant research geared towards development in all parts of the country. It is essential that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) position themselves to collaborate and share knowledge and innovation with county governments and development agencies to impact positively on national development.

Tana River County has high potential for heightened socio-economic development in almost all sectors. Specifically, there is high potential in the areas of mining, agriculture, culture and tourism which can be leveraged in collaboration with the research community to achieve improved economy and better livelihoods for the citizens by advising policy makers on development potential of the county and creating opportunities for the generation of new technology and techniques, thereby stimulating innovation and knowledge utilization, as well as improving value addition in the various potential areas.

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The challenges facing the utilization of research include inadequate resources, inadequate infrastructure and weak linkages between research community and policy makers.

This has led to underutilization of research for development, hence has hampered progress made towards ensuring that research promotes development in the lives of citizens at the grass root level.

However, interactions between researchers, policy makers, development agencies and government agencies such as this has the potential of improving utilization of new knowledge resources for better livelihoods.

Ladies and gentlemen, for the benefit of today's interaction, I seek your indulgence to highlight that the University of Nairobi has expertise across all disciplines ranging from health, environmental sciences to engineering and applied sciences to agriculture, just to mention a few that can be tapped into to achieve national development as envisaged in the Kenya Vision 2013.

The University of Nairobi in its commitment to creation, preservation and integration of new knowledge is ready to work with Tana County Assembly and other development agencies in addressing the various areas of societal needs and challenges. Ladies and gentlemen, let me take this opportunity to applaud

NEMA and the University of Nairobi's Department of Geography and Environmental Studies for organizing and facilitating this conference and hope that these efforts will translate into stronger working relations between NEMA, Tana County Assembly and the University of Nairobi.

Ladies and gentlemen, with these remarks, I wish you a fruitful workshop. It is now my humble task to declare this Conference officially opened.

Thank you

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