



**SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROF. GEORGE A.O. MAGOHA
DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI'S WORLD HEALTH
ORGANIZATION COLLABORATIVE CENTRE FOR
STD/HIV/AIDS RESEARCH AND TRAINING ANNUAL
SCIENTIFIC RETREAT ON MONDAY 22ND JANUARY
2007 AT 9.00 A.M. AT THE PANARI HOTEL, NAIROBI.**

Dr. E. Szathmary, the President, University of Manitoba,

The Rector, University of Ghent

Prof. J. Kaimenyi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (AA)

Prof. Lucy Irungu, Principal, College of Health Sciences

Fellow Scientists

Representatives of our development partners

Colleagues

Ladies and gentlemen

On behalf of the University of Nairobi Council, Senate and on my own behalf, I am pleased to be with you once again in this year's University of Nairobi WHO Collaborative Centre for STD/HIV/AIDS Research and Training Annual Scientific Retreat.

The problem of STD/HIV-AIDS is a global problem though more widespread in third world countries. This annual international forum brings together health experts to search for a long lasting solution to this problem.

In the late 1970s the Universities of Nairobi and Manitoba and the then Universities of Washington and Ghent, with support from WHO over the years the initiative has grown to include other participants from America and Europe.

It is worth noting that the contribution from other Kenyans, North American and European Institutions such as KEMRI, United States Military HIV Research Program, Oxford University, the Universities of Toronto, Illinois and California at San Francisco and Emory University.

This collaborative research venture has been productive in terms of high quality research, scientific publication in top notch peer reviewed journals. The scope of the high quality research from this group is quite wide, covering basic science, social science, epidemiology and clinical trials. The recently released results of a clinical trial showing the benefit of male circumcision effect on HIV transmission is an example of the high quality research being carried out by the group. Results of the continuing work on HIV breast milk transmission, clinical trials on preventive AIDS vaccine, and on microbicides - a female initiated HIV transmission control method, are eagerly awaited.

In addition, a considerable number of Kenyans and individuals of other nationalities have benefited from the training offered by the collaboration, both locally and overseas, leading to awards ranging from certificates to PhDs.

Two major infrastructural benefits for the University of Nairobi from this collaboration are noted, namely the Kenya AIDS Vaccine Initiative (KAVI) – which has become a centre of excellence in HIV/AIDS vaccine research, and the University of Nairobi Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (UNITID), intended to become a world-class centre for

research and training in tropical and infectious diseases, and a regional referral diagnostic centre for new and emerging diseases such as Ebola, Lassa Fever and Rift Valley Fever, just to mention a few. Our most sincere thanks and deep appreciation go to our development partners, the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) and the University of Manitoba and the Province of Manitoba Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI), for their financial support towards establishment of KAVI and UNITID, respectively. Indeed UNITID received its state-of-the-art facility from donors two days ago. This facility once fully complete will radically transform health service provision in the region.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this seminar is expected to discuss past research findings and their effects in the field of health and exchange ideas on the possible way forward. It is my belief that fruitful discussions will guide this retreat.

With those few remarks, it is my pleasure to declare this retreat officially open.

Thank you.