UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR, PROF. G.A.O. MAGOHA DURING THE OFFICIAL HANDING/TAKING OVER OF THE INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL AND INFECTIOUS DISEASES (UNITID) BUILDING ON FRIDAY 19TH JANUARY 2007 AT THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES
Hon. Tony Clement, Canadian Minister for Health
Hon. Charity Kaluki Ngilu, Minister for Health, Republic of Kenya
Mr. Dominique Collinge, Ag. Canadian High Commissioner to Kenya
Dr. Emöke Szathmary, President, University of Manitoba
Dr. Frank Plummer, Director, National Laboratories, Canada
Dr. James Nyikal, Director of Medical Services, Kenya
Dr. Miceni, Director, Kenyatta National Hospital
Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi, Deputy Vice Chancellor (AA)

Principals of Colleges

Deans/Directors of Faculties, Schools and Institutes

Chairmen of Departments

Members of staff

Students

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen
Let me take this opportunity to warmly welcome you to the University of Nairobi during the official handing over ceremony of the building that will house the Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (UNITID).

This is indeed a very special occasion for the University of Nairobi because it is the first time we are hosting two Ministers of Health at the same time. It is also special because we are celebrating the fruits of collaboration between our two
Institutions and also the people of Canada and Kenya.

When I and my colleague, Dr. Szathmary officiated over the ground breaking ceremony for the building the Hon. Minister is about to hand over to the University on 2\textsuperscript{nd} May 2005, we pledged to have the project completed on time. I am therefore delighted that this wonderful facility has been completed on schedule. This is in line with our recently launched Service Charter which commits
us to delivery of service within specific timelines hence improving effectiveness and efficiency.

The opening of UNITID building is a milestone in the history of this University. The building will house the *state – of – the – art* equipment which will include Level 3 laboratories to be used in the handling of highly contagious emerging pathogens, such as the Rift Valley Fever (currently occurring as an epidemic in some parts of this country), Ebola, Marburg and other viral hemorrhagic diseases.
Ladies and Gentlemen, such facilities are rare in most African Universities. Indeed apart from this University, such facilities are only available in South Africa. This, therefore, means that Kenya, and in particular the University of Nairobi will be a reference centre in the region for the diagnosis of viral hemorrhagic fever and related diseases. To achieve this, the people of Canada through the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI), the University of Manitoba and the Government of the Province of Manitoba donated nearly 4 million
Canadian dollars to construct the building, equip it and maintain it for the next five years.

Honourable Guests, on behalf of the University of Nairobi and on my own behalf, I would like to thank the Government and the people of Canada for the support extended to our research and development activities. It is no doubt that their contribution over the years has enhanced research and training capacity at the University of Nairobi.
Ladies and Gentlemen, it is important to note that this new facility will increase the current total research space by 215% in addition to providing space for the training of health personnel in the country on epidemiology and control of infectious diseases. In this context, I am happy to inform you that the University of Nairobi through the Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases (UNITID), has mounted training programmes which will go a long way in training and equipping health personnel with the necessary knowledge to predict disease epidemics, carry out disease surveillance with an
eventual aim of control. We look forward to the day when this country will have Infectious Disease teams to manage epidemics that seem to be recurring with increased frequency.

The research infrastructure whose official opening we are witnessing today is going to provide a backbone which will introduce programmes to fill the gap that has hitherto existed in emerging pathogen studies, the bio-containment technology and retrovirology work. While doing so, it is my hope that UNITID, which will coordinate the efforts
on behalf of the University, shall harness the available expertise to be able to offer their experiences to our collaborating partners and their affiliations all over the world.

With this new facility, the University of Nairobi looks forward to becoming a centre of excellence in infectious disease research and control very soon. As indicated earlier, the UNITID building will forever be a testimony to our fruitful collaboration with Canadian Institutions to improve service delivery at the University of Nairobi.
May I once again thank the Hon. Minister, Tony Clement for visiting our University to handover to the University and people of Kenya this wonderful new year gift; our Minister for Health, Hon. Charity Kaluki Ngilu for finding time from her busy schedule to join us on this auspicious occasion; my colleague and good friend, Dr. Emöke Szathmary and her team from University of Manitoba for their invaluable support to our academic programmes. We hope the collaboration between our Institutions will continue for many more years to come.
With those few remarks, it is my pleasure to welcome our Minister for Health, Hon. Charity Ngilu to address this gathering and in turn invite our main guest to make his remarks.

Welcome honourable Minister.