UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

OPENING REMARKS BY PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI, VICE CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI DURING THE NATIONAL URBAN YOUTH FORUM HELD ON MONDAY, FEBRUARY 8, 2016 IN 8.4.4. MULTI-PURPOSE HALL AT 9.30 A.M.
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,
I want to take this opportunity to warmly welcome you to the University of Nairobi, and to our great country, Kenya. As a University, we continuously endeavor to achieve our vision and mission, guided by our core values. I am happy to bring to your attention that the University of Nairobi has recorded marked improvement in international rankings.

In the January 2016 Webometrics Ranking of Universities edition, the University of Nairobi was ranked position 6 in Africa and 697 in the world. This ranking has placed the University among the top 3% universities worldwide out of 24,000 higher education institutions assessed.
The ranking is indeed a confirmation that the University of Nairobi has been at the forefront of offering quality and holistic education in the region for the past six decades. This is against the backdrop of the University being the largest, comprehensive teaching and research institution in Africa.

Ladies and gentlemen
I would like – on that note – to commend the organizers of this forum for identifying the University of Nairobi to co-host this important national event – the National Urban Youth Forum.
I understand that the National Urban Youth Forum is a major formal engagement of the youth in Kenya to contribute to the Post-2015 Development Agenda, HABITAT III Conference on “Housing and Sustainable Urban Development” to be held in Quito, Ecuador in October, 2016.

This forum brings together youth from the 47 counties of Kenya to share knowledge and experiences, as well as help shape the Post-2015 Development Agenda – in my guess to be youth friendly and sensitive. May I also recognize the presence of youth from other countries who have come to participate in this forum; the experts, researchers and academics guiding the deliberations; and all other invited guests.
Ladies and gentlemen
The high rate of urbanization in sub-Saharan Africa comes with numerous social, economic, environmental and spatial development challenges such as increased levels of urban poverty and vulnerability; social differentiation and inequity; unemployment; food insecurity; inadequate provision of services; and slum incidences, among others.

Most of these urban challenges affect the youth or are felt more by the youth. It is estimated that by the year 2050, about 50 percent of the world’s population will be living in urban areas. Most importantly, about 60 percent of all urban dwellers will be under the age of 18 by 2030. A rising youth
population – what is generally known as the “urban youth bulge” – makes it imperative to address the various dimensions of urban youth.

Ladies and gentlemen:
Even with these worrying trends, many are the times when young people’s needs are left out in urban planning, development and governance. Although policy makers express concern about the future of young people, few have actually taken steps to address the social, economic, political and environmental conditions that shape young people’s lives.
This forum is therefore very timely and important not only for the youth but also as a platform to advocate for sustainable youth-friendly and sensitive urban planning, development and governance.

As I conclude, ladies and gentlemen:
There is no doubt that youth are society’s most important and dynamic human resource and should not be ignored. The youth have the potential and capabilities to drive change. The Post-2015 outcome document recognizes that “children and young women and men are critical agents of change”. As such, the youth should be accorded enough support to participate in decision-making and policy processes such as the National Urban Youth Forum.
Ladies and gentlemen:
With those remarks, I hereby declare the National Urban Youth Forum officially opened.

Thank you and I wish you very fruitful deliberation

PETER M.F MBITHI, PhD, EBS
VICE-CHANCELLOR
AND
PROFESSOR OF VETERINARY SURGERY