SPEECH BY PROFESSOR GEORGE A. O. MAGOHA
VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI WHILE
MEETING VISITORS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF
OTTAWA, CANADA, ON 16TH JANUARY 2007 AT 12.00
NOON IN THE VICE-CHANCELLOR’S COMMITTEE
ROOM
Professor Jamie Benedickson, Co-director of IUCN Academy of Environmental Law

Our Visitors in his team from University of Ottawa

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (A&F)

Principal, College of Humanities & Social Sciences

Dean, School of Law

Director, IDS

Coordinator, CASELAP

Chairman, Department of Public Law

Prof. Patricia Kaneri-Mbote
I welcome you all to University of Nairobi and to the Republic of Kenya.

You have come to us as pioneers and on a fact-finding mission aimed at building a foundation for collaboration between this University and your own. The team you are meeting and others you will meet during the week are aware that you come here only partly as representatives of University of Ottawa. The bigger picture is that you have come as agents of the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law.
We have followed very closely the arrangements towards this visit since May 2006 Inaugural Meeting of the Governing Council of the Academy. We understand that activities of the Academy were taken very seriously at all levels of academic and administrative management of University of Ottawa. We understand that the management of your University was fully supportive of inter-university collaboration as one of the avenues for promoting excellence in scholarship, which is one of the objectives of the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law.
There is certainly a significant sign of support for the Academy than that University of Ottawa resolved to host the Academy giving financial infrastructural and inspirational support to its aspirations.

I want to stress the historical fact that University of Nairobi was only second to Shanghai University by declaring support for the Academy and its activities. In the initial stages when the aspirations of the Academy were still only abstract concepts in
the minds of Professor Nicholas Robinson of Pace University and his colleagues, this University resolved to concretize the concept by hosting the Second Colloquium of the Academy here in Nairobi. About 90 academics, administrators and students of the University volunteered to organize the largest event in academic calendar that year, in the continent. We are keen to hear from those who attended that colloquium if there has been a better organization either at Macquarie University in Sydney or Pace University in New York. In other words we were happy and proud to be associated with the efforts to launch one of the most
respectable learned societies in the world. I believe that University of Ottawa is even more proud, actually hosting the respectable and unique Academy.

It must therefore be a shared sense of delight and courage that our two universities take on the challenge of pioneering inter-university collaboration to promote objectives of IUCN Academy of Environmental Law.
We accepted the challenge of international scholarly collaboration with University of Ottawa because the proposal falls squarely within our vision. It is our vision to be “A World Class University committed to academic excellence and transformation of the lives of Kenyans and serving society with distinction”.

Underlying this vision is the inevitable axiom that we are determined to engage in collaboration with like-minded universities worldwide so that our scholars can dynamically
compare their standards with scholars in comparable institutions. Just like scholars engage in dialogue virtually, and through published works, we encourage our scholars to engage personally through joint research, joint supervision of students as well as in distance teaching. I submit to you that a world-class status is not something one professes while in a secluded academic ghetto. Our borders must be constantly opened for interaction and engagement, which enables our scholars to constantly compare their levels of scholarly performance with partner institutions.
As you travel from Ottawa, Canada to Nairobi to explore avenues for collaboration, I trust that with our colleagues, you will be focused. Keep in mind that the IUCN Academy and its objectives is known worldwide. Your colleagues worldwide will be listening to hear if you are, indeed concretizing the aspirations of the Academy. If, as we agree, the Second Colloquium held here was a success, my office will not agree that the collaboration initiated here should fail. Therefore, I challenge you to workout a serious memorandum of understanding, which can field concrete and measurable results. I challenge you to present to my office an
acceptable memorandum for signature within the next six weeks. It goes without saying that the Academy and University of Ottawa world not have invested quality time and resource for seven people to come to Nairobi for two weeks if they were not clear on objectives. Under these circumstances procrastination would be counter productive and valueless. This University will not accept such an eventuality.

I want both sides to keep in mind that collaboration in scholarship thrives in mutual respect. I have stated already that
scholarship depends on University of standards. Neither Nairobi nor Ottawa nurtures ghetto scholarship. You must constantly keep it in mind that collaboration is not only for comparability of standards; it must also promote mutually recognized excellence.

It is for that reason I go back to the Second Colloquium of the Academy in 2004. Out of the forty papers from that Colloquium, which were published in the book on *Land Use for Sustainable Development*, by Cambridge University Press, 2007, four papers were by Kenyan scholars. Remember first, that there were more
presentations, than four. The book could only include so many from Kenyans. There were eleven from other African scholars.

I want to firmly congratulate those who organized the successful colloquium and those who presented papers, which now constitute the book. I will be glad now to present the book to the contributors. In that way we applaud and encourage the work of the Academy.
Your programme will be crowded and I may not meet with you before your return to Ottawa. I trust that you will have a final get together with my colleagues under chair of the Principal of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Do convey my personal gratitude to the President of your University and your colleagues and say I look forward to making their personal acquaintances here in Nairobi or in Ottawa. Please reserve special appreciation for Professor Nicholas Robinson and the entire Governing Council for the initiatives in steering the IUCN Academy of Environmental Law.
Thank you