UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

REMARKS BY PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI, VICE CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI DURING THE “UNIVERSITIES FOR A SUSTAINABLE CULTURE OF PEACE AND SECURITY” FORUM HELD ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 22, 2015 AT THE CENTRAL CATERING UNIT.
In recent years, a great proportion of news in various media has been about violence, radicalization, violent extremism and armed conflict as they affect various segments of society. This has led many players including the state, civil society, the private sector, research and educational institutions to be actively engaged with the task of examining and indentifying the causes of the violence, and finding solutions, together with proposing peace building processes in order to reduce or eradicate the violence.

To add value to this process and build on ongoing efforts, universities in Kenya have now proposed to be engaged in assisting to build a sustainable culture of peace and security.
Specifically, the idea is to explore how scholars and researchers could bridge the gap between research, policy making and policy implementation. e.g. could the university curriculum address peace and security? In what ways could universities engage students in theorization and practice of peace?

This is in consideration of the fact that Universities have a vantage point of engaging young people at the moment of their critical-thinking development stage. Whereas the education on human rights, inculcation of human values, tolerance, reciprocity and responsibility, mutual respect, and human dignity that constitute our Kenyan value system should begin at a tender age of socialization, higher
education institutions play a powerful and crucial socialization role of instilling critical thinking, theorizing and interrogating skills that can enable the young people to transform their communities during and after their university education. At the same time, and very important, they are able to question political and other leadership processes that often times make them vulnerable to political patronage and violence; hold leaders to account for governance and human rights; and ensure that the government fulfils its mandate in ensuring human security and lives of dignity which are pathways to a sustainable culture of peace and security.
It is in this context that the UNESCO/UNITWIN Chair has organized consultative forums with universities, students and other stakeholders in government, civil society and the private sector to critically interrogate the role of universities in creating a sustainable culture of peace and security in Kenya. In the first instance, these forums are meant to address the following three levels of involvement of universities in building that sustainable culture of peace and security.

- The theoretical/conceptual academic leave.
- University culture from within.
- Universities and society in the face of insecurity.
The overall objectives of the consultative forums will be to:

1. Document the contexts and forms of violence that young people are susceptible to in Kenya, taking stock of existing initiatives aimed at peace building, reducing violence, and countering radicalization and extremism.

2. Examine current university policies and programs, how they address issues of human rights education and human security, peace and security including the extent to which they involve students and student bodies in decision-making processes.
3. Provide a platform for university students to suggest viable ways of engagement in reducing/ending all forms of violence in universities, communities, nationally and transnationally.

4. Identify specific programs and activities for involving students in creating peace and security in and out of campus, and draw a road map and plan of action for achieving these activities.

5. Deliberate on processes of creating and fostering synergies amongst academic institutions, state and non-state actors, and how to exploit these synergies to strengthen the role of Universities in creating a sustainable culture of security and peace.
6. Constitute a team that will guide and coordinate activities of University engagement in peace and security.

7. To interrogate the nexus between peace, security and extremism.

8. Launching of programmes and activities.

The proposal is to hold various consultative forums with separate but related activities. This therefore, is the first such forum which essentially is a Dean of Students Workshop.
The objectives of this workshop therefore, are broadly as follows:-

a) Share experiences of engaging and interacting with students, particularly in instances of student violence.
b) Examine university policies, how and the extent to which they involve students and student bodies in decision-making processes.
c) Document existing student programs that are aimed at peace building, reducing violence, and countering radicalization and extremism.
d) Suggest ways in which existing programs and courses, if any, may be strengthened towards an education that inculcates a culture of peace and security.
e) Look into mechanisms and strategies utilized by Deans of Students in managing the different clubs and unions e.g. (Students unions) in universities.

f) Deliberate on the agenda for the major sensitization forum and Launch of the project.

g) Constitute a team that will guide and coordinate Wajibu Wetu programs and activities.

It is therefore my earnest hope that by the end of this workshop, you will come up with ideas and proposals satisfactory to the attainment of the above objectives and which will be forwarded to the University Vice-Chancellors, through relevant organs for action as we move this process to the next stage.
With those remarks, it is now my pleasure to declare this forum officially open.

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