UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

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REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI DURING THE SYLFF PEACE FORUM HELD AT ARZIKI CONFERENCE CENTRE, CHIROMO ON DECEMBER 8, 2016 AT 9.00 AM.
Our honorable guests Sasakawa Officials (Ms. Yoko Kaburagi and Ms. Aya Oyamada), Director Board of Post Graduate Studies University of Nairobi (Prof. Lydia Njenga), all SYLFF Alumni present, current SYLFF fellows and participants, good morning. It is my pleasure to warmly welcome you to the University of Nairobi and in particular to this two-day Youth Peace Forum.

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.
The University of Nairobi is therefore pleased to host this Forum which brings together young people from East, South and West Africa to deliberate on the critical issue of violent extremism. Violent extremism is an alarming security issue not only in Africa, but the world at large.

The focus on countering violent extremism is of major interest to the University as a driver of Change in the larger society. The University has in the past hosted workshops and panels on countering Violent Extremism.
For instance on June 29, 2015, the Ministry of Interior and Coordination of the Government of Kenya, in conjunction with the University of Nairobi organised a Panel discussion on "COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM: DEEPENING THE DISCOURSE ON LEGITIMATE NARRATIVES.

I therefore most sincerely thank the Tokyo Foundation under the Sylff Leadership Initiatives (SLI) for sponsoring this Forum and I am confident that the deliberations from this event will go a long way towards offering solutions to the pressing problem of violent extremism among young people in Arica and beyond.
Finally, I wish to greatly appreciate the Sylff Fellows, University of Nairobi Chapter led by Mr. Majune Socrates who came up with this noble initiative of organizing this important Forum.

I also thank each and every one of you for finding time despite your busy schedules to attend this event. I wish you all fruitful deliberations and urge you to feel at home.

Thank you and have a blessed day.

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