UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF PETER M.F. MBITHI DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF GOOD PRACTICES WORKSHOP BY AFRICAN QUALITY ASSURANCE NETWORK (AFRIQAN) OF THE ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES (AAU), HELD ON MARCH 20, 2019, AT THE MINI-LECTURE THEATRE (ROOM 401) AT 9.00 A.M.
• AfriQAN Coordinator/AAU Director of Research &
  Academic Planning, Prof. Jonathan Mba

• The Deputy Vice-Chancellors

• The College Principals

• Deans and Directors

• Members of staff

• Ladies and gentlemen
Good morning ladies and gentlemen,

I would also like to take this exceptional opportunity to welcome you to the official opening ceremony of Good Practices Workshop by African Quality Assurance Network (AfriQAN).

The University of Nairobi has been actively participating in the Association of African Universities (AAU’s) activities.
The previous Vice-Chancellors have held various leadership positions of the AAU. To note but a few:

- Prof. George Magoha – the immediate former Vice-Chancellor was a member of the AAU board for more than two terms (between 2005 and 2013). In 2010, He was the Acting President and 1st Vice President of the AAU.

- Prof. Crispus Kiamba – Was the rapporteur general at the AAU’s conference held in
Stellenbosch South Africa in 2011 and currently an expert in the African Centers of Excellence Project.

I am aware of the involvement of University of Nairobi Experts in The African Centers of Excellence; notably:
• Prof. Agnes Mwang’ombe of Department of Crop Science & Crop Protection in the Faculty of Agriculture and

• Prof. Raphael Wahome of Department of Animal Production in the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

To advance the African Agenda 2063, universities have the responsibility to drive the process. Africa as a continent requires interventions, creativity, and innovations for its own solutions to the countless challenges it faces. The AAU builds on the guiding AU vision for Agenda 2063 of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa.
This agenda is driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena.

Universities should enhance their core mandate of teaching, research, and community services by mentoring and giving hope to the rising young population in our countries.
Therefore, the Good Practices Workshop presents a great opportunity for quality assurance experts to share the experiences and learn from each other the best practices that can transform higher education in the continent.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to point out and emphasize on two major concerns:
First, research in Africa is mostly dominated by non-Africans. However, whenever research is carried out by Africans, the findings and resultant benefits are not made known to the people concerned. Hence, it is our responsibility to ensure that this is changed for the betterment of the next generations.

Let us embrace our own research work by encouraging, collaborating and supporting research-
related activities within our universities. It is prudent for Africans to carry out research that informs policy. Research in Africa should focus on the specific needs of the continent.

Secondly, publications by African researchers have become rare and the menace of predatory journals is progressively killing African researches. I challenge you to provide leadership in this area and be
proactive in encouraging African universities and regional Associations to establish journals that will advance the African agenda/issues. The focus should also shift to the development of informative policy briefs that can influence government decisions.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We cannot talk of research excellence without mentioning Quality Assurance. Quality Assurance in higher education institutions takes two shades:

I will start with the aspect of Internal Quality Assurance. Improving quality means ‘doing it right the first time’ to eliminate the cost of poor quality in higher education institutions.
This will help embrace the efficient use of the available resource to the core functions of the universities. Last year in June, I sent two of my senior members of staff to attend the 2018 AAU/AfriQAN Quality Assurance for Higher Education Leaders (QAHEL) workshop that was held in Lagos, Nigeria.
I intend to continue engaging with both regional and international associations to enhance the capacity of my staff so as to enhance the quality of outputs within our systems and processes.

I trust that universities in Africa can invent and innovate more applicable models for Best Practices applicable to African Context.
The second aspect is that of External Quality Assurance. Quality enhancement is about self-assessment as opposed to external pressure or coercion from the statutory and regulatory bodies.

Therefore, more emphasis should be put on enhancing self-regulation of higher education in universities. For this reason, sharing good practices
in handling external pressures will enrich each other’s expertise in this critical area.

Universities should add their voice and influence in higher education and the government’s decision/policy-making organs. This will assist in advancing the universities’ agenda. It will also serve to discourage the least qualified people in making
decisions that impact negatively on the higher education sector.

Finally,

I challenge you to come up with standardized quality assurance policy papers during this workshop. This will make it possible individual universities and countries to customize them with the aim of advancing higher education agenda across the
continent. More so, I urge the AAU to bring on board members from other countries in Africa.

While in Kenya, take time to sample some of Kenya’s tourist and cultural destinations like the Nairobi National Park, the National Museum among other scenic and cultural centres.
Let me now wish you a fruitful workshop as I declare the 2019 Annual Good Practices Workshop officially OPEN!

Karibuni Sana!

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