UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

REMARKS BY PROF. PETER M. F. MBITHI, THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE UNCTAD P166 COURSE HELD ON MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2019 IN ROOM 405, UON TOWERS AT 9.00 A.M.
• Secretary-General, UNCTAD Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi
• Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ambassador Macharia Kamau
• UNDP Resident Representative Mr. Siddharth Chatterjee
• Invited guests
• Ladies and Gentlemen
Africa interacts with the rest of the world mainly through international trade. Sadly, Africa contributes to only about 2% of the net world trade. According to the World Bank, in 2013, 42.3% of the population of sub-Saharan Africa lived on $1.90 or less per day due to endemic poverty. Africa therefore needs Human Resources that have the capacity to handle both domestic and international economic issues. Africa urgently needs professionals who can contribute to
its development and development policies. It requires Policy makers who understand the role of international trade and finance in a globalised world. It needs Planners that would design policies aimed at achieving Sustainable Development Goals through reduction of poverty, hunger, and gender inequalities.
The University of Nairobi is the pioneer institution of university education in Kenya and in the region and has been training graduates who have found their way in employment in both local and international institutions including the United Nations and UNCTAD. It offers diversified academic programs and specializations in line with its Vision of being a World Class University.
The University has been collaborating with various international organizations and universities since its inception. It maintains active external linkages and networks for research and consultancy, capacity building, staff and student exchange, curriculum development, and dissemination of research findings. Such institutions include UNCTAD and WTO.
It is on this premise that the University of Nairobi responded to a call for proposal to host the P166 in 2018 and on October 3, 2018, the University was awarded the honour to host UNCTAD Regional Courses on Key Issues on the International Economic Agenda 2019 and 2023. I thank Secretary General and the UNCTAD fraternity for that.
I firmly believe that the outcome of this course will enhance the capacity of the participants to not only contribute effectively in the formulation of development policies in their own countries but also demonstrate through their work that the University has the capacity to host such international courses and conferences.
The University of Nairobi has been associated with UNCTAD since 2007 when we applied and became a member of the UNCTAD Virtual Institute. UNCTAD has contributed a lot in the capacity building of Kenya in general and the University of Nairobi’s in particular.

A number of staff of the University community and other Kenyans in general have been awarded
certificates and diplomas from UNCTAD funded courses.

Some have also managed to secure internships and fellowship opportunities at UNCTAD in Geneva to do research having been facilitated by the UNCTAD Virtual Institute Fellowship Program.
I acknowledge with great appreciation that since the University of Nairobi became a member of the UNCTAD Virtual Institute in 2007, we have received more than 500 book donations to the School of Economics Graduate Library. The UNCTAD online databases and book donations have not only helped in increasing the quality of research done by staff and students but also led to an increase in trade related research at the University.
The Virtual Institute Research Funds for localization of generic teaching material have also gone a long way in improving the teaching of trade related topics in the University.

I need to mention that UNCTAD Virtual Institute has also held training workshops in different parts of the world and a number of our staff have also benefited. Such workshops have been on various topics such as:
1. Teaching and Research of Trade and Poverty: Conceptual and Methodological Approaches and Policy Implications

2. Trade and Gender Analysis

3. Food Security and International Trade

4. Trade Empirics Using STATA

We are proud that the P166 course is now being held in Kenya and specifically the University of Nairobi
this year and again in 2023. This will not only contribute towards capacity building in the African Region but also enhance the visibility of the University of Nairobi and its capability to host such courses and to demonstrate that it also has a rich pool of experts who should be called upon to train in other countries after 2023.
I take this opportunity to welcome all of you and wish you all the best during the 11 days of training.

Thank you.

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