SPEECH BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR, PROF. PETER M. F. MBITHI, DURING THE SYMPOSIUM ON “GET TO KNOW REFUGEES - THEIR ROLES IN THE HOST COUNTRY” HELD AT THE 8-4-4 MULTI-PURPOSE HALL ON WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2015
• Amb. Dr. Monica Juma, P.S of Interior and Co-ordination of National Government.
• Hon. Abdullahi Diriye, Member of Parliament
• Mr. Haron Komen, Commissioner for Refugee Affairs
• Mr. Rogelio Morales, IMF Country Director
• Ms. Lucy Kiama, Executive Director, Refugee Consortium of Kenya
• Dr. Abbass Gullet, Secretary General, Kenya Red Cross
• Mr. Laban Onditi Vice Chairman of the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry
• Ms. Anne Othoro, Nairobi county executive member for Trade, Industrialisation, cooperative development and wildlife
• Mr. Raouf Mazou, UNHCR Representative
• Invited guests,
• Ladies and Gentlemen,
It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the University of Nairobi where we are hosting today’s symposium on the topic GET TO KNOW REFUGEES, THEIR ROLES IN THE HOST COUNTRY as part of the World Refugee day which is being hosted by the Institute of diplomacy and International Studies in partnership with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the Kenya Government through the Department of Refugee Affairs. We also recognize the support of the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Danish Refugee Council and members of the Refugee partners Network.
As you are aware, Kenya has for close to three decades been host to refugees and asylum seekers from Somalia, South Sudan, Mozambique and Uganda. It is estimated that the country hosts over half a million refugees in Kakuma and Daadab refugee camps.

Although refugees and asylum seekers have sought refuge from conflict and political persecution in Kenya, and are often perceived as putting a burden on the host country, some of them also play a significant role in the socio-economic and development initiatives of Kenya.
In this regard, refugees continue to engage in:

- Trade activities
- Employing Kenyan citizens
- The provision of professional services like teaching and medical services in the camps

Consequently, the potential of refugees and their impact on Kenya’s socio-economic platform is significant.
The University of Nairobi is committed to academic excellence and continues to be involved in training and research. A lot of this research has been geared towards encouraging sustainable development through integration and resilience of communities in Kenya. Given our multicultural and indeed our multinational society, the University continues to encourage more research, especially on the impact of Refugees on the socio economic and sociopolitical environment. In addition, the Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies has since its establishment in 1979, been involved in in-depth research on refugees and has also been involved in training students with refugee status in international studies.
We are therefore here today, to celebrate these achievements and recognize the various contributions made by refugees in Kenya.

The entire community of the University of Nairobi therefore joins the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, the Department of refugee Affairs and other esteemed partners represented here today in acknowledging the presence and role of the refugee community in the University. The role played by the refugee community in the growth of the University population cannot be underestimated.
They have enriched our student body through creating a multinational student community which provides a platform to share experiences and learn from each other.

Let me once again re-emphasize the significant impact made by refugees in our economy and society through their expertise, skills and experiences. Today marks an important day in the series of events leading up to the World Refugee Day which is commemorated on the 20th June. The University of Nairobi is proud to be hosting the discourse on the refugees in the host country and I sincerely want to thank the partners for organizing this Forum.
With those remarks, it is now my pleasant duty to open this forum and wish you fruitful deliberations and an eventful commemoration of the role of refugees.

Thank you.

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