SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI ON THE ROLE OF THE KENYAN PARENTS IN PARTICIPATING IN CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR CHILDREN DELIVERED DURING THE 7TH KENYA NATIONAL PARENTS ASSOCIATION DELEGATES CONFERENCE ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2015 IN THE CENTRAL CATERING UNIT AT 10.00 AM
Cabinet Secretary, Education, Science and Technology, Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi

Chairman, Kenya National Parents Association

Secretary General, Kenya National Parents Association, Musau Ndunda

Officials of the Kenya National Parents Association

Delegates

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen
It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the University of Nairobi as we host the 7th Kenya National Parents Association delegates conference. I wish to thank the organizers for choosing to host this national event at the University of Nairobi and for inviting me to share my insights on ‘the role of the Kenyan parents in participating in character development of their children.’

Ladies and gentlemen, I am a parent and I can confirm to you that there is no defined blueprint on how to raise our children to be persons of desirable character. However, it is our duty as parents to ensure that our children grow up to be “upright” citizens. I believe that if the role of parenting is played appropriately, then
parents are meant to be the first teachers and the first pastors to their children.

Indeed, raising children with an upright character is becoming a challenge among parents in Kenya. Crime levels in Kenya are averagely higher than the global average. The Economic Crime Survey (2014) reported that economic crime in Kenya stands well above 37% which is the global average. According to a report by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2014), over 71,000 criminal instances were reported to police stations countrywide in 2013. This high level of crime in Kenya raises the question of how we can raise a future generation of desirable character.
Ladies and gentlemen, although character is influenced by different factors, it is important to understand the role of parents in shaping children’s character and behaviour. Therefore, it is within the family that we learn to care for others beyond ourselves, to sacrifice ourselves for others and to love others. I strongly believe that the family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.

Ladies and gentlemen, the sacred status of parenthood comes with increased demands on the individuals. When one becomes a parent, he/she acquires three distinct roles that must be fulfilled simultaneously for the benefit of the child. Prior to becoming a parent,
one is usually just an individual and probably a spouse, but when a child comes into the picture, then a third identity which is being a parent, is acquired. Parenting is a delicate balance of identity. Indeed, successful parenting is founded on how one is able to develop the three identities, namely, self, spouse and parent.

In addition parenting comes with great responsibilities. Parents are expected to provide emotional and economic support to the children, undertake the socialization of children into the desired norms and values of the community and provide guidance with regard to the children’s sexuality.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is therefore within the family that one becomes what he/she is in the society. Other
institutions such as the church, school, administration and the state will only build on the foundation that the parents have laid for the children. As parents, we should avoid unbecoming behaviors that will negatively influence our parenting skills such as ineffective parental behaviour, lack of supervision, over-permissiveness, inconsistent or overly strict discipline, a weak bond of affection and the inability to set clear limits. We need to be people that our children can look up to. Let us mentor children and desist from crime, violent acts and substance abuse.

As I conclude, successful parenting must involve the growth and development of healthy families, neighborhoods, communities and the countries.
Community organizations tasked with shaping and developing children’s behavior should always work closely with the parents to successfully achieve their goals. Let us embrace interventions such as parental training and family therapy in order to register improvement in parenting skills.

Ladies and gentlemen, as we strive to be the best parents our children could have, I wish you fruitful deliberations during this national delegates’ conference.

Thank you.