UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

WELCOMING REMARKS BY PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI, VICE CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI DURING THE 6TH PAACLIP SCIENTIFIC CONGRESS NAIROBI CONVENTION CENTRE HELD AT THE NAIROBI HOSPITAL ON MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2018, AT 11.00 A.M
Invited Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen
Good morning, it is a great pleasure to be in the 6th Pan African Cleft Congress. It is fitting that you are here in Kenya to brainstorm on the second most common congenital birth defect. A lot of investments have been placed in infectious diseases but time has now come to attend to conditions like the cleft lip which have not received enough attention.
Those afflicted suffer in many ways; for instance, they face difficulties in eating, growth and speech just to mention a few. The most immediate sign of the problem is a physical defect that has a huge impact on the way other people perceive them.

The reaction by most people here in Africa frequently leads to stigmatization of the child and even the
mother. The stories of cleft patients are often heart-rending. I need not belabour the importance of the contribution you have made by dedicating your time and talent to help. Your intervention is certainly life-changing.

One remarkable aspect is the fact that you offer your time and skills, on several occasions, at no cost. The wonderful work of such cleft charities such as The
Smile Train, Operation Smile among others, provides additional funding that makes it possible to offer free services to cleft patients.

Many families in Africa cannot access basic health services let alone affording it. You can, therefore, imagine how catastrophic it is for the same family when faced with a special problem like the cleft lip
and palate. The timing of this event could not have been better.

Kenya, like many other countries in Africa, is in great need of a solution to provide better healthcare. In Kenya, for example, the focus is on universal access to healthcare.
Creating awareness is an important step in the strategy and this conference is a good example. We hope to see governments eventually mainstream the funding for the care of patients with cleft lip and palate.

This forum has brought together some of the best experts in the field. This is the kind of forum that has the capacity to provide leadership in the matter of cleft lip and palate within and even for reference
beyond Africa. Thus, it is my hope that you shall be able to set standards and protocols to improve the care for Africans suffering from cleft lips and palates. I would like to propose that the Congress looks into ways of lobbying for the financing of the care in each of our countries.

We, as a University, are already taking action at our level. The University of Nairobi has been involved in
cleft management and the specialized members of staff from the College of Health Sciences (CHS) also manage many other congenital defects.

We have medical staff who have a focus on cleft lip and palate repair and who are partners or volunteers with charities such as The Smile Train and Operation Smile. The two charities are well represented in this Congress.
I am informed that The Smile Train is the platinum sponsor for this Congress and I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate them for their generosity in supporting this congress and generally for their noble works in Africa.

Also, the Smile train is collaborating with the School of Dental Sciences in the establishment of an
institute of cleft surgery at the University of Nairobi. The institute will offer a 2-year fellowship training course for cleft lip surgery in the region. I invite each of you to come and join us in order to make the effort a success.

I would also like to congratulate the PAACLIP secretariat for their praiseworthy work in organizing this conference. We also recognize the efforts by the
Local Organizing Committee which included UoN staff and other team members led by Dr Meshack Ong’uti. They have done a commendable job in making sure this event takes place in our country in an exemplary way.

I wish you a successful congress with fruitful interactions among yourselves and the guest speakers.
We hope that at the end of the congress you will come up with recommendations and protocols for the care of clefts in Africa and the rest of the world.

With great honour, I hereby declare this 6th PAACLIP Scientific Congress officially open.
Thank you all and Welcome!

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AND
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