UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI DURING THE STUDENTS’ LEADERS WORKSHOP ON “UNIVERSITIES FOR A SUSTAINABLE CULTURE OF PEACE AND SECURITY” HELD AT UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI OLD COUNCIL CHAMBER ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 2017 AT 11.20 A.M.
• University Chancellors
• University Vice Chancellor’s present
• Deputy Vice Chancellors
• College Principals
• Workshop organizers
• Other resource persons
• Invited Guests
• Student Leaders
• Ladies and Gentlemen,
Let me start by officially welcoming all of you to this very important workshop, where we are engaging university student leaders in the critical matters of Peace, Safety and Security. It is important for all student leaders to internalize the issues to be discussed between today and tomorrow, so that they impart and cascade them to the general student populace.
In 1965, the Government of Kenya (GoK) produced one of the most well-thought and thorough sessional papers (Sessional Paper No. 10 on African Socialism and its Application to Kenya). The document, produced barely two years after the country’s independence, argued that accountability, integrity, mutual social responsibility and reciprocity formed the core values that would define Kenya’s national character. Kenyans were encouraged to pull together
their energies, resources, aspirations and expectations towards one direction, with a common purpose and a desire to achieve prosperity for the young Nation. These core values, aspirations and expectations provided the backdrop for the Kenya Constitution (2010), particularly Chapter Six of the Constitution on Leadership, Governance and Integrity. In pulling together, conflicts, ethnic animosity, tribal groupings, extreme violence and
radicalization would be minimized. The “Wajibu Wetu” project has been an attempt to fall back on the wisdom of the authors of Sessional Paper No. 10; the vision of the Kenyan Nation as articulated in the National Anthem; and through University Research and Community engagement, to create a sustainable culture of peace and security both in our Universities and communities.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The core mandate of Universities is to develop creative and critical thinkers through teaching, research, innovation and new technologies. It is on the strength of this mandate that the University of Nairobi, in 2012, put together a team to propose to the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, to start a University based Project on Sustainable Peace and Security. The Project was
launched in January, 2013 with a Vice Chancellors’ Round Table Conference here in Nairobi. That Conference was captured in the Interlude, and you will have listened to Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi articulating the role of Universities.

Since then, the University of Nairobi, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Interior and National Coordination, Global Peace Foundation, and several partner Universities has organized workshops, visits
to Schools, and other events to sensitize communities, students, and leaders on the role of Universities in the creation of a Sustainable Culture of Peace and Security. The rationale behind the Project is that Universities are the pinnacle of intellectual engagement. The argument that “wars are conceived in the minds of men”, can be turned into positive reality through intellectual, innovative and critical thinking, by students and scholars as
they engage in research and dissemination of knowledge.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

One major challenge facing our Universities and the Country in general is radicalization of youth. The output of radicalization is extreme violence, and at times terrorism. This is an area where Universities have to vigorously counter, with knowledge, technology and determination, all attempts to
radicalize our youth in order to secure our Country and National Institutions. The other challenge is the increase in Cyber Crime. The pain experienced by ordinary Kenyan Citizens due to cyber bullying, misguided information, and down-right stealing of funds from Banks and other financial institutions can be minimized if the Universities, particularly, the students, can play their part.
Ladies and Gentlemen;

Let me address an issue that it is of importance to our Universities. The most valuable resource that we have is our students. It is critical that we move away from looking at our students as a problem, but rather, as an asset, a great strength and a major resource for leadership and transformation of the Kenyan economy. Students, you are critical thinkers, dynamic and energetic members of the
University fraternity. It is this conviction that has made the University of Nairobi convene this workshop. We are happy you accepted our invitation to participate.

The Sustainable Development Goals, developed by the United Nations, have added new impetus to our understanding of a Culture of Peace and Security. In order to achieve Goal Number 16, you must be fully engaged in finding ways of giving birth to Peace and
Security, nurturing the same, and sustaining the momentum. This calls for a paradigm shift. Universities have to provide the intellectual impetus, not the ad-hoc initiatives that spring up before General Elections and fade away. The Foundation for sustainability has to be scientific research, based on tried theoretical framing, and tested over a period of time to see what works, and what does not work. Together, we can achieve this for Kenya. Together,
we can bring about a University based “Renaissance” which will bring a sustainable culture of peace and security.

As you think through your role in sustainable culture of peace and security, I would like to remind you that Kenya will be holding our general elections in less than three months time. Each one of us must champion for peace both before, during and after the
elections. This way, all of us will have shown that we stand for peace and we stand for Kenya. There are some guidelines that can support our activities during this period. I will share a few of them with you:

- Avoid partisan political activities within the Universities.

- Sensitize your fellow students on avoidance of destructive political discourses in Universities.
• Avoid misuse and abuse of institutional facilities and equipment for political purposes.

• Be vigilant and avoid abuse of alcohol and drugs in Universities during this period.

• Be your brother or sister’s keeper, and show solidarity for the good of your University.

• Promote Peace and Cohesion in all the activities that you undertake during this important period in our Country’s history.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The University of Nairobi has existed beyond the 50 years of Kenya’s Independence. Our motto remains the same, “*Unitate et Labore*”. We believe in Unity, in cohesion, in togetherness. This unity gives us the conducive environment for productive labour. As we embark on these two days of engagement, I wish you Unity of purpose, of mind and will. Work hard so that we can bring about peace and security. I
welcome you, once again, and wish you very fruitful discussions.

Thank you.

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