REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. GEORGE A.O. MAGOHA ON THE OCCASION OF THE BICENTENARY OF THE NORWEGIAN CONSTITUTION ORGANIZED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI AND THE ROYAL NORWEGIAN EMBASSY IN NAIROBI ON MAY 19, 2014 AT 8-4-4 MULTI-PURPOSE HALL
- Chief Justice of Kenya, Hon. Justice (Dr.) Willy Mutunga
- Chair of the Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution, Mr. Charles Nyachae
- Prof. Bard Andreassen Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo, Norway
- Chargé d’affaires, Norwegian Embassy, Ms. Hilde Solbakken
- Ms. Lisa McLean, Country Director of the National Democratic Institute
- Principal, College of Humanities & Social Sciences
- Deans and Directors
• Staff and Students
• Ladies and Gentlemen
It gives me great pleasure to welcome our distinguished guests to the University of Nairobi to commemorate this historic occasion.

Ladies and Gentlemen, May 17, 2014 marked the bicentenary of the second oldest constitution in the world; that of the Kingdom of Norway. We are gathered here at the University of Nairobi, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the promulgation of that Constitution. I am also aware that similar events are taking place all over the world, and we feel honoured that the Norwegian Embassy in Kenya, singled out our institution as the
venue to host this historic event. Indeed, this demonstrates that we are a World Class University and an intellectual forum of choice for international discourse.

The Norwegian Constitution has lasted for over 200 years, mainly because of its liberal values and has only been outlasted by the Constitution of the United States of America. Through its constitution, Norway has served as a leading light internationally in the implementation of democracy, the rule of the law, human rights, gender and equality. Like Kenya’s first constitution, which was geared towards founding the
independent Republic of Kenya, that of Norway was written as a strategic move to liberate Norway after 400 years of Danish rule. In Kenya, we saw the need to come up with a new constitution more than 40 years after our first constitution. The Norwegian constitution has retained its original objects and principals, even though it has been amended over 400 times over the course of the 200 years it has been in existence. We as a nation can learn a lot from the Norwegians on the implementation and sustenance of our Constitution, and we hope that
this forum will provide us with the opportunity to reflect upon this.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are aware that the Kenyan Constitution 2010 with its expanded Bill of Rights is a people-driven constitution. The Kingdom of Norway, its agencies, has been aiding Kenyan civil societies in their struggle to better the lives of the citizenry. We at the University of Nairobi have been part and parcel of this process of fighting for the recognition of Human Rights, albeit from an academic rather than an activist perspective.
Indeed, in 2008, even before the promulgation of the new Kenya Constitution, the University of Nairobi established the Centre for Human Rights and Peace. This Centre, together with faculty from various disciplines in the humanities & social sciences, carry out multidisciplinary research on issues related to human rights and peace. The Centre also offers a Master of Arts Degree in Human Rights. In 2011, the Centre for Human Rights and Peace hosted a regional symposium that was sponsored by the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights and the Institute for International Education, in Naivasha. The well
attended symposium was opened by the Chief Justice Willy Mutunga and papers from that conference are currently under review and will soon be published. We would like to single out Prof. Bard Andreassen of the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights, University of Oslo, and our own Dr. J.B. Ndohvu who were instrumental in the organisation of this event and are guiding the review process.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we hope that today’s deliberations on the constitutions of Kenya and Norway will provide food for thought in relation to sustained peace and development within a political
framework that provides for the respect for human rights. With these few remarks, it is my great pleasure, now, to invite our chief guest Hon. Justice (Dr.) Willy Mutunga, Chief Justice of Kenya, to open the seminar and give a keynote address.

Thank you.