UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

SPEECH BY VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. GEORGE A. MAGOHA, DURING A BOOK LAUNCH BY PROF. JOHN KOKWARO ON OCTOBER 24, 2014 IN THE VICE-CHANCELLOR’S PARLOUR AT 3.45 P.M
The author, Prof John Kokwaro
Chancellors
Deputy Vice-Chancellors
College Principals
Deans and Directors
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen
I am truly honored to officiate here today during this ceremony that marks the launch of “Classification of East African Crops” by Prof. John Kokwaro. I would like to begin by acknowledging that this book has been published under license by the University of Nairobi Press, and is a fine example of the partnership that exists between our scholars and the publishing outlet. This University has benefited from the Press, as we call it, and indeed have re-branded ourselves as a centre of academic excellence.
Ladies and gentlemen, the book “Classification of East African Crops”, is a very welcome addition to the list of the UON Press, but also an affirmation on the role of the University of Nairobi as a soul searching community, keen to find solutions to some of the key challenges facing the country such as improved agriculture and food production, tackling hunger, drought and disease. Indeed, Prof Kokwaro’s previous publication on medicinal plants is evidence of this commitment. I wish at this juncture to sincerely appreciate Prof Kokwaro for this effort.
Ladies and gentlemen, in this book, the author has endeavored to make the readers understand and recognize the crops and other useful plants grown in East Africa. The book, indeed, also aims at simplifying communication with regard to the names of what we call economic plants, I can identify with Kokwaros sentiments that “we may claim to know all the food plants that we need but fail to recognize the lawn grasses to plant in our home, similarly, we may know all the crops on our farm but fail to identify the forage crops suitable for our livestock”.

Thus, the book is intended to solve many of the puzzling questions connected to English, trade or botanical names of the economic plants in the region. I am impressed with the book's coverage of both cultivated and useful wild plants, researchers will have new plants to explore. I perused the book and was gratified to find a list of major and minor crops and useful plants as a very welcome addition to my knowledge on which plants to plant at my home, and because I am a medic, which forbidden plants to look out for, in my shamba.
Ladies and gentlemen, Prof Kokwaro has been teaching at the University for the last 46 years. In that period, he has taught and mentored hundreds of scientists in his area of specialization in Botany. Prof Kokwaro is not a man who is shy of practicing his trade. About five years ago, he approached management on a project named Botanical walk through the University of Nairobi. In this walk, Kokwaro and his students tagged a plat to trees and shrubs around our University. Here on main campus, everywhere you walk, a tree or shrub has been tagged, you get the species name, local name etc.
But that work my friend is not complete, with the new tower, there are more shrubs for you to tag, perhaps you will take up the new challenge to ensure that the new trees are also tagged. Allow me also to challenge the creative writers in the community to write and to generate pamphlets/stories on the botanical walk through the University of Nairobi, who knows, it might be a new source for generating revenue?
Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to challenge the UoN Press to take a leadership role in publishing more and I reiterate that the Management will continue to support the Press so that it maintains its position as a leading scholarly publishing house. I just want to wish Prof John Kokwaro well and of course to challenge him to continue with the same energy to publish and increase knowledge. As a “Professor of botany, you will no doubt publish another piece, and the Press that will welcome your contribution is the University of Nairobi Press, where you are already a repeat and valued client.
With those remarks, it is my honour and privilege to declare this book officially launched.

Thank you.