UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

SPEECH BY PROF. GEORGE MAGOHA, EBS, VICE CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, ON THE OCCASION OF LAUNCHING THE DEAF ROLE MODELS AFRICA FILM ON SEPTEMBER 17, 2014 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
• Principal Secretary, Ministry of Education, Dr. Belio Kipsang
• H.E. The Ambassador, Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands, Mr. Joost Reintjes
• CEO/Commission Secretary, CUE, Prof. David K. Some
• University Management
• Partners
• Stakeholders
• Prof. Michael Ndurumo
• Distinguished guests
• Staff and students
• Ladies and gentlemen
It gives me great pleasure to address this meeting to launch the Deaf Role Models Africa film. The film portrays eight successful deaf role models who have gone against great odds to be where they are today. They tell their story, difficulties, and aspirations. The role models are not speaking for themselves, but for other deaf persons too that given the opportunity and quality teaching and services, deaf persons can succeed in life. We feel indeed challenged by the role models and the institutions that they represent. We congratulate their teachers and mentors who shaped them early in life. We are indebted to the parents and friends who encouraged them to be what they are today.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you are aware the World Health Organization/World Bank Disability Report of 2010 states that the prevalence of disability worldwide is 15%. This means that there are one billion persons with disabilities in the world.
today. Using this prevalence, Kenya can be said to have 6 million persons with disabilities. This is a significant number and calls for training manpower to assist, educate, train, and rehabilitate persons with disabilities.

To achieve this monumental task, universities need to be adequately equipped in order to play their role effectively. At the University of Nairobi, we specifically require funding and resources to train manpower in special education, rehabilitation, psychology, counselling, audiology, and other relevant programmes required. We also require funding to revamp existing infrastructure and buildings to make them friendly to persons with disabilities.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you are aware the Constitution of Kenya 2010 and the Persons with Disabilities Act 2003 enshrine the rights of persons with disabilities to education.
Right to education is a catalyst to achievement of quality life and empowerment.

The Constitution specifically recognizes sign language as the third official language of the Parliament. The Constitution also states that sign language along with Braille and other supplementary modes of communication, should continuously be researched upon. This means that universities and research institutes are mandated to ensure, in case of deaf persons, that sign language is continuously researched, documented, and enhanced.

In this regard, I am happy to state that the University of Nairobi is committed to that ideal and will soon be partnering with JICA and KNAD to carry research on sign language at higher level. We also plan to offer diploma and degrees in sign language interpretation in order to meet the demand for
Qualified interpreters. Qualified and professional interpreters are critical if deaf persons are to access educational, legal, health, social, religious, counseling and psychological services.

In regard to employment of persons with disabilities, both the Constitution and the Persons with Disabilities Act state that at least 5% of all appointments should be reserved for persons with disabilities. The University of Nairobi is trying its best to meet this requirement, and would like to go beyond the concept of having a pool of 5% persons with disabilities in the workforce to where they are integrated at all levels of employment including managerial and executive positions.

Ladies and gentlemen, in 2010 the University developed the Disability Mainstreaming Policy to ensure that it achieves specific targets of making its environment and programmes accessible to persons with disabilities. In this respect, each
college of the University has a disability mainstreaming committee which advises the respective principals on the issues that need require both immediate and long-range plans.

Ladies and gentlemen, as you are aware, the field of disability is wide and varied. We at the University of Nairobi appreciate the uniqueness of each category of persons with disabilities, and also the differences within each category. In this connection, the University shall continue to address and interrogate our policies to ensure that no person with disability studying or working at the University of Nairobi is discriminated against. We shall do this by ensuring that the principles of reasonable accommodation and the universal design are adhered to in order to fulfill our mandate as required by the Constitution, the Persons with Disabilities Act, and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of which Kenya is a signatory.
As I conclude my remarks, I would like to thank Kentalis International for finding it fit to interview three deaf members of our university and also for the elegant coverage of the administration building in the film. I would also like to thank Prof. Michael Ndurumo of the Department of Psychology for asking Kentalis International to launch the film here. Finally, I appreciate the important role played by various persons and departments in the University to make this launch of the Deaf Role Models film a success.

With these remarks, I welcome you to this launch of the Deaf Role Models Africa film here at the University of Nairobi.