UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

OPENING REMARKS BY VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. GEORGE MAGOHA, DURING THE PUBLIC DEBATE FOR “WAJIBU WETU”: TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE CULTURE OF PEACE IN KENYA” – APRIL 29, 2013 AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, MULTIPURPOSE 8-4-4 HALL
University Chancellors
Vice-Chancellors
College Principals
Deans and Directors
Invited Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen
Welcome to the University of Nairobi, and to this academic debate on a Sustainable Culture of Peace.

On March 4, 2013 Kenyans voted in a landmark first election under the new constitution which was promulgated in August 2010. The Election was the culmination of intervention initiatives by the Government and its affiliated institutions, civil society organizations, media organizations and individual citizens, urging Kenyans not only to preach, but to uphold peace during the electioneering period.

A relative quiet has engulfed the country since polling day despite the contestation surrounding the
final outcome. However, as a nation we would be shortsighted to assume that a culture of sustainable peace has finally engulfed us. While remaining optimistic, the academic fraternity need to be critical and pose two key questions:

- To what extent is the relative quiet following the outcome of the 2013 elections a manifestation of the genesis of a culture of peace in Kenya?
- What steps must we take to demystify, domesticate and entrench a lasting culture of peace in the country?

The concept “Wajibu Wetu” (Our Shared Responsibility) is a combination of the core values
that guided the founding father of the Kenyan Nation. Sessional Paper No. 10 of 1965 on: “African Socialism and Its Application to Kenya” brought to the fore “accountability, integrity, mutual social responsibility and reciprocity” as the core values that would define the Kenyan character. The constitution of Kenya (2010), specifically chapter six, is anchored on these values.

The concept therefore, captures the National ethos which continues to nurture our Universities. It calls for Universities to render their intellectual contribution to “Nation Building”, not just through the production of creative and critical thinkers, but, most importantly, through research, innovative
engagement, guided curiosity and utilization of technology.

Ladies and gentlemen, our Universities must become the leading change agents in the quest for lasting peace in Kenya. “Wajibu Wetu” is a clarion call to universities to join hands and bring to the centre stage the unique talents that they offer and nurture so that Kenya can cultivate a culture of peace. It is a reminder that the academia should not extricate its role as an agent of change. “Wajibu Wetu” summons us to put our efforts together to bring about a peaceful and sustainable revolution in the way this nation understands politics.
Today’s event, coming after the Vice Chancellors’ Round Table Conference held in January 2013 at the Intercontinental Hotel, offers another opportunity to reflect on the role Universities can play in the re-awakening of Kenya’s Collective Conscience in cultivating a suitable culture of peace in our country. Through it, we continue to challenge the stereo type dichotomies of “Politics” and “Academe” and to create a vibrant “University-Community” continuum that will build bridges towards a culture of peace.

To help this debate take shape, the University Community is today honoured to have Prof. Goran Hyden, one of the early scholars to work in this
University to give his key note address. Many of you would know the many books and articles written by this renowned scholar. His book on “No Shortcuts to Progress” has been used as a standard text book in many African Universities.

He is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus in Political Science, University of Florida at Gainesville. He is a former Director, Centre for African Studies at the same University.

Prof. Hyden, on behalf of the University of Nairobi, I welcome you to share your ideas with us so that together we can move forward with unified sense of
purpose to work towards a Sustainable Culture of Peace.

Thank you.