UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

SPEECH READ BY PROFESSOR GEORGE A.O. MAGOHA, VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, DURING THE INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS CONFERENCE ON HIV/AIDS PANDEMIC IN AFRICA AT THE COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES ON 18TH DECEMBER 2006.
Director of Medical Services

Principal, College of Health Sciences

Dean, School of Medicine

Representatives from the Ministry of Youth Affairs

Participants From Foreign Universities

Participants From Other Organizations

Patron of AMSUN

AMSUN Leadership

All other Protocol observed
Ladies and gentlemen, I am happy to join key speakers on health science, students and delegates from various organizations which deal with health related issues in this key conference. Our aim of converging here is to focus our energies on tackling a pandemic that has destroyed the fabric of human society. This event also doubles as the first annual general meeting of the Federation of Medical Students of East Africa (FEMSA).

The five-day conference marks a major shift in
the fight against HIV/AIDS. Indeed it is a positive development to note that the initiative is coming from the youth who are the most affected by the pandemic in the Sub-Saharan Africa – current trends indicate that over 70 percent of all cases of HIV infection in the world is found in this region.

The Association of Medical Students of the University of Nairobi (AMSUN) should be commended for taking the right direction in the fight against HIV/AIDS. By harnessing its
energies and directing them in the fight against the pandemic, it has proved its commitment in helping our society. At the end of this event, whose theme is "the Impact, Management and Challenges of HIV/AIDS Infection in the Developing World", we should be able to come up with other strategies and measures of taking the fight against the scourge to another level.

This development ladies and gentlemen, augurs well for the University, which launched its HIV/AIDS policy sometime last year. The major
highlight of our policy is to have an institutional framework on fighting AIDS and brings to the forefront the University Community in this war. According to our policy, the University has no choice but to “play a leadership role in HIV/AIDS prevention, control, care and support in the pursuit and development of knowledge through quality and relevant teaching, research, consultancy and community service”. This is because like all other Kenyans, HIV / AIDS is affecting the University directly. Part of what is provided in our policy include provision of
Voluntary Counselling and Testing services, counselling, provision of anti retroviral drugs and provision of contraceptives to both students and staff. This policy recognizes the role students and staff can play in this fight and also provide care and support to all its affected members.

As part of sensitisation of our students, all first year students now undertake a compulsory common course on HIV/ AIDS. Our students and members of staff also participate actively in the annual Women Aids Run held to commemorate
the World Aids Day. As an institution our fight against the pandemic has received support from various quarters, which include UN agencies particularly UNESCO and UNICEF, the government, non-governmental organizations, and various other organizations.

In this connection, I am pleased to see that AMSUN has already taken leadership on the part of students to compliment our efforts in fighting the pandemic. To ensure that AMSUN remains vibrant and visible, I am happy to note that the
Association went on an aggressive membership drive that has so far netted over 1400 members. This membership is not only local but has spread to our neighbouring countries thus aiding in spreading the fight beyond our national borders.

The presence of local and foreign participants shows that the organization has taken giant steps in combating the pandemic. I am happy to recognize that Prof. Flynn from the UC Davis Medical Centre, California, is among prominent scholars who will make presentations at this
This conference is rich in content and will be beneficial to all participants. It has more than 33 abstracts for presentation in the conference, two workshop sessions and a single ward session at the Kenyatta National Hospital. To illuminate the conference further, guest speakers have been invited from various organizations including NACC, NASCOP, UC Davis Medical Centre, Kenya Human Rights Commission, KAVI and University of Nairobi to give different perspectives on the conference.
theme of the conference.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the onus of bringing down the HIV/AIDS prevalence rates in the world and more specifically in Sub-Saharan Africa requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders. The students and professionals have taken the lead in fighting the pandemic, but there is still room for an all-inclusive approach to counter the spread of HIV/AIDS.

To ensure that this conference takes place there
was input from various stakeholders. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for the kind support you have accorded AMSUN. More specifically I acknowledge the role played by KAVI, Ministry of Youth Affairs, World Health Organisation, UNES and the College of Health Sciences. At the end of this conference, recommendations and resolutions made should be passed to the Ministry of Health for consideration in the HIV/AIDS Policy.

Last but not least I would like to take this
opportunity to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The rallying call by the government “Total war on Aids” (“Pamoja tuangamize Ukimwi”) should remain our motto as we take the fight to the next level.

Thank you.