UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI, DURING THE SCHOOL OF LAW CURRICULUM REVIEW WORKSHOP HELD AT THE GREAT RIFT VALLEY LODGE, NAIVASHA FROM JULY 1, 2015 TO JULY 3, 2015.
The University of Nairobi School of Law offers one of the leading professional programmes in the country, a reputation that has propelled the School to international recognition, and improved the corporate image of the University. As the oldest School of Law in Kenya, the University of Nairobi’s School of Law has distinguished itself as a hub of legal scholarship with a strong foundation for training on advanced legal concepts, legal advocacy and legal research. The School of Law has distinguished itself as a center of excellence in research, scholarship and teaching.
The school’s operations are premised on the understanding that the study of law should inculcate in students the requisite knowledge, skills and attitudes for a broad range of theories and practice areas.

Through its current and former team of legal scholars, the School has made significant contributions in pioneering and setting the agenda and trajectory for legal issues in the public and private sectors. It has nurtured legal researchers and practitioners who have contributed to the development and growth of endogenous jurisprudence by harnessing the capacity of individual academic staff and students in the areas of Democracy, Governance and Law, Financial and Commercial Law, Human Rights Law, Environmental Law
and International Law. This has been aided by the fact that the study of law at the University of Nairobi is grounded within and nurtures exemplary legal research and scholarship.

On account of its human resource and infrastructural strength and aware of its trail blazing role and contribution to the development of legal education, the School of Law is the only Law School in Kenya that offers graduate law studies at Master’s and Doctoral levels. Through these programmes, the School has contributed towards nurturing and developing a legal academy and legal academics in Kenya to meet the growing demand for highly trained and qualified law teachers in the country and beyond.
It is appreciated that staff from the School have contributed and continue to contribute to the development of law programmes for public and private universities nationally and internationally. There are also staff members who have served or are serving in leadership, advisory and management roles of various universities as chancellors, vice-chancellors and council members. Indeed, the Dean of School of Law, Prof. Patricia Kameri Mbote is also a Chair of the Kenya School of Law.

The University of Nairobi is undoubtedly the training ground for senior university academic staff in public and private universities. In this role, the School of Law and other units of the University have lent support to such universities by
granting leave of absence to staff to assist other universities and institutions on the understanding that the staff return after their tour of duty.

The school’s programmes have also equipped other highly trained cadre of legal practitioners nationally, regionally and internationally in crucial spheres in the private and public sectors. Notably, a sizeable part of the Kenyan Bench, members of the Bar engaged in public and private sectors; civil society organizations; and legal academics comprise alumni of the School of Law, University of Nairobi.
Lately, the School of Law has been reviewing its curriculum to capture current dynamics in the discipline, and also to align the curriculum further to the needs of industry. It is this new curriculum that will be re-visited and fine tuned in this workshop so that we come up with a finalized document by Friday July 3, 2015. Through the revised Curriculum, the School of Law seeks to train lawyers exposed to advanced spheres of knowledge, and who understand the varying social, political and economic contexts in which the law operates.

It is envisaged that the review of the Master of Law (LLM) curriculum at the school of Law will consolidate, harness and nurture its research, scholarship and teaching in the niche
areas. In particular, the reviewed Curriculum should achieve the following objectives:

- Develop a Master of Laws (LL.M.) program that builds on the Bachelor of Laws Program, in which the School of Law is consolidating, harnessing and nurturing scholarship and teaching in five thematic areas of law, namely: Financial and Commercial Law; Democracy, Governance and Law; Human Rights Law; Environmental Law; and International Law. In offering advanced courses in these thematic areas, the LL.M. Program seeks to take advantage of its unique expertise.
• These thematic areas will be the embryonic foundation for Centres of excellence to facilitate research, enhance pedagogy, and contribute to national and international discourses.

• To meet local and global market demand for specialized lawyers, which makes it necessary for lawyers to enhance their skills if they are to compete effectively. This demand is driven by two predominant factors:
  (a) The emergence of new areas of legal practice (including sports, entertainment, and oil, gas and mineral law); and
  (b) The constitutional requirements for both public and private sector professional practice.
• To train lawyers who can offer highly competent legal services in order to respond to the globalized legal environment, which has become more competitive, transnational and dynamic.

• To enable students to progressively and timeously meet their professional needs by offering a program that is streamlined and efficiently managed.

• To equip students to conduct viable and relevant research.

• To train lawyers who are able to apply law in its social, economic, cultural and political context.
I am aware of the efforts the School is putting in place to ensure that it attains high ranking status locally, regionally and internationally.

On its part the University, in collaboration with friendly partners will soon be putting up the proposed School of Law Tower, which will not only improve the learning environment at the School but will also ensure compliance with Council of Legal Education (CLE) requirements and align the School to the best international law practices.

Meanwhile, Management is looking at your request for provision of extra space to accommodate the School of Law, Mombasa Campus. This will soon be addressed with additional space allocation at Uni Plaza.
The University will also welcome and support collaborations and partnerships by the School to ensure capacity building and improvement of physical facilities, library and library resources.

With those remarks, I wish you fruitful deliberations and hope that by the end of the workshop, you will come up with a curriculum that meets the needs of the market and that will serve the University for a reasonable number of years.

Thank you all and have a good day.

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AND

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