SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI AT THE INAUGURAL LAUNCH OF THE PRESIDENTIAL DIGITAL TALENT PROGRAMME, FEBRUARY 10, 2015 IN TAIFA HALL, 2.00 P.M.
• Your Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta
• Your Excellency Deputy President, Hon. William S. Ruto
• Cabinet Secretary for Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) Dr. Fred Matiang’i,
• The Cabinet Secretary for Devolution and Planning Ms. Anne Waiguru,
• The Governor, Nairobi City County, Dr. Evans Kidero
• Other Honorable Cabinet Secretaries present
• Principal Secretaries Present
• Members of the Diplomatic Corps
• Chancellor, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi
• Chairman of Council, Dr. Idle Farah
• Partners of the PDTP
• PDTP graduating Class of 2015
• University of Nairobi managers
• Faculty, Staff and Students
• Distinguished guests
• Ladies and Gentleman
I am privileged to welcome you to the University of Nairobi for the inaugural launch of the Presidential Digital Talent Programme.

**Your Excellency,**

Allow me to preface my speech with a few words not directly related to today’s agenda. May I first express gratitude to you and the government for giving me the opportunity to lead the next steps of the development of the University of Nairobi as Vice-Chancellor. Aside from saying ‘thank you’, I assure you that I have every intention to make Kenyans proud of this University and to make it
perpetual glowing and glorious edifice of University education in Africa and beyond.

May I also thank you most sincerely, Your Excellency, for your association with and more importantly support to the continuing developments taking place at the University.

**Your Excellency Sir,**

We are proud to be associated with the Presidential Digital Talent Programme particularly because this transformative initiative promises to harness the power of ICT in delivering effective solutions in the public sector like never before. I have no doubt that the partnership between the “Bearers of the Digital Promise”, ICT professionals in the public sector
and experts in the private sector will cross-pollinate ideas and innovations that will ultimately evolve into a home-grown best practice regime in the use of ICT for more efficient service delivery to *mwananchi*.

Hosting this initiative’s inaugural launch at the University of Nairobi’s Taifa Hall is itself a great honour. In reciprocation, we pledge to support the programme’s ideals and promise to walk with it into the future in order to give it character and rhythm and ultimately assure its success.

**Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen**

The University of Nairobi is the oldest, most comprehensive, largest and best ranked university in Kenya and outside South Africa and Egypt. Throughout the 45 years this university has been in existence, it has
strived for excellence in teaching, research and community service in fulfillment of our role of providing effective solutions to challenges affecting our country. Since its inception, the University of Nairobi has experienced unprecedented growth in many areas.

Currently academic programs stand at 584, student enrolment at 80,000, Faculty and staff at 7,200 and graduates at 174,033.

As we steadily grow, so have we continued to innovate in order to ensure that we remain relevant to today’s challenges as we aspire to supply the human capital needs of our country.
In this regard, the university has many partnership initiatives and programs with Government agencies and the industry which address fundamental elements of the university’s mandate.

One of the initiatives relevant to today’s event and which we are proud of is the technology innovation laboratory, the Computing for Development lab (C4DLab), created by our School of Computing and Informatics (where some of the programme participants graduated from). It was launched in 2014 by the Cabinet Secretary for ICT, Dr. Matiang’i. This lab incubates innovative ideas and potential commercial products from our ICT research efforts that solve local industry problems. The lab is currently
incubating over ten ICT start-up companies. I am proud to announce that we will graduate one business into the private sector before June this year. Your Excellency Sir, we will be making a proposal to your esteemed office to assist in upscaling the activities of this incubation lab in order to nurture new ICT enterprises that create innovative products for local, regional and global markets.

**Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The University of Nairobi has also partnered with the ministry of ICT in the following initiatives:-
Cadastral Survey Consultancy.

- This was to mark out Phase 1 of the Konza Technopolis. This survey paved the way for the development of Phase 1 infrastructure, which includes construction power lines, laying of water and sewerage lines, laying of the fibre optic cables and the ultimate development of verticals. This consultancy assignment was awarded by the Konza Technopolis Development Authority (KOTDA) to the Department of Geospatial and Space Technology of the University of Nairobi.
In May 2012, The University of Nairobi was competitively sourced to host in its School of Computing and Informatics a Business Process Outsourcing/IT enabled Services (BPO/ITES) Centre of Excellence by the ICT Authority. This Centre provides BPO/ITES training for the private industry in order to enhance the competitiveness of Kenya in BPO and IT outsourcing.

So far 63 graduates have completed the certificate course in BPO/ITES of the University of Nairobi.
• This project is a partnership between Ministry of ICT, IBM and University of Nairobi. It is therefore another initiative between University of Nairobi, Public Service and the Private Sector.

The National ICT Master Plan was developed, under the direction of the Cabinet Secretary, by a Taskforce led by one of the fathers of ICT in Kenya based in the University of Nairobi, Prof. Timothy Waema. The project we are launching today is one of the flagship projects in this Master Plan.

The ICT Authority has collaborated with the Computing for Development Lab (C4DLab) of the University of Nairobi to carry out specialised training
for the private sector and to partner with private sector to implement some of the projects in the ICT Master Plan.

Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Presidential Digital Talent Programme you are launching today is a product of solid needs analysis and expertise. It is, essentially, an expression of innovation trained on how best to nurture and tap the potential of our young people, themselves an assailable bulwark of solutions to challenges related to the quality of service delivery to the public.

Further, the innovativeness of this potentially game-changing initiative lies in the extensive collaboration
between public and private sectors. Structured collaboration between the public and private sector players is the seedbed of a more responsive and desirable human capital value chain.

Sir, let me affirm that, as a stakeholder in the human capital value chain, this university will play its role as effectively and as humanly possible to ensure that this programme succeeds.

To make this happen, our commitment is (a) to equip our students with knowledge in critical subject areas so that their value to the economy is enhanced; (b) to address and take action on gaps in our curricula that render the skills we impart on our students dissonant at the workplace and (c) to constantly collaborate with the private and public
sectors to ensure that our programmes equip our graduates to enhance their resourcefulness in solving challenges that we face as a nation.

**Your Excellency,**

Creating closer links between the academy and industry and re-imagining the role and relevance of Kenya’s human capital as the lynchpin in our quest to unlock our country’s economic potential is paramount. You, Sir, are best placed to spearhead a new beginning in tertiary training institutions to remodel curricula and approach to training in order to expose our youth to the world of work and encourage them to acquire the right attitude and work
ethic while still undergoing training. As a trailblazer, the programme we are launching today fits that bill perfectly.

**Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We at the University of Nairobi recognize the fact that technology provides the tools, power of analysis, speed of processing and capacity to handle huge volumes of information critical to decision-making. Technology offers unprecedented opportunities for improvement, which would translate to effectively serving our people and improving their lives.

We are glad that Presidential Digital Talent Programme focuses on technology, itself the single most crucial
imperative that determines how far the quest for social and economic transformation confers benefits to modern-day societies. So far, **Your Excellency**, Kenya has secured herself a place of honour globally for leading in ICT innovations. The programme we are launching today is opportune in the sense that it will ride on this reputation and goodwill to assure its success. I am glad that you personally consider this sphere of excellence an important pillar for Kenya’s prosperity.

**Sir,**

We firmly believe that time to challenge all arenas of human endeavor, from education to healthcare, recreation to governance, industrialization to transport and infrastructure, policing and national security to agriculture
to embrace technology as an enabler and a service-delivery enhancement tool has come.

**Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am strongly persuaded that the time to take a keen interest in mentoring our youth as a matter of social duty has come. In this regard, His Excellency would do the youth of this country a great deal of good by championing an initiative where eminent Kenyans join you in shaping the destinies of our youth, many who get lost for lack of mentors and examples.

Above all, it is time we encouraged and unlocked our collective imagination to deliver solutions to our immediate
challenges in a more systematic manner; *And a time when all leaders buy into the possibilities portended by imagination, creativity, and innovativeness.* We at the University of Nairobi are ready to support such endeavours that can, if supported transform our fortunes and destiny as a nation.

Thank you very much Mr. President Your Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen.