REMARKS BY PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI, VICE CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI DURING UNESCO INSTITUTE FOR LIFELONG LEARNING – UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI COLLABORATION ON ORGANIZATION OF WORKSHOP ON MOBILIZING HIGHER EDUCATION AND DISTANCE LEARNING ASSETS, CAPABILITIES AND NETWORKS TO SUPPORT YOUTH AND ADULT LITERACY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA HELD AT THE HILTON HOTEL NAIROBI ON JUNE 13, 2017
• Prof. Collette Suda, Principal Secretary, State Department for University Education,

• Prof. Chacha Nyaigotti Chacha, Chairman, Commission for University Education

• UNESCO Chair on Women and Sustainable Development

• Reps for UNESCO Regional Offices, Eastern and Western Africa,
• Secretary General, Kenya National Commission for UNESCO,

• Professor Paul Zeleza, Vice Chancellor, USIU

• Representatives from other Universities in Africa

• Resource Persons,

• Ladies and Gentlemen
I recall mid last year when the UNESCO Institute for lifelong learning (UIL), based in Hamburg, Germany, approached the University of Nairobi to explore opportunities for collaboration on the project - Mobilizing Higher Education and distance learning assets, capabilities and networks to support youth and adult literacy in Sub-Saharan Africa.
In the meeting, the background to this project was explained in detail and the University was very positive to the idea.

Today, ladies and gentlemen, I would like to appreciate the effort put in by all stakeholders in organizing this workshop to deliberate on various issues related to Mobilizing Higher Education and distance learning assets, capabilities and networks to
support youth and adult literacy in Sub-Saharan Africa.

The theme of the workshop is in line with sustainable development goal 4 and agenda 2063 literacy targets in Sub-Saharan Africa which resonates with Kenya Vision’s 2030 Social Pillar.

It is also important to note that the University of Nairobi’s strategic plan 2013/2018 has a specific
objective on enhancing access to education opportunities to Youth and Adult learners. Ladies and gentlemen, Lifelong learning means provision and use of both formal and informal learning opportunities throughout people's lives in order to foster the continuous development and improvement of the knowledge and skills needed for employment and personal fulfillment. Distance
education is a critical mode of delivery that has proved capable of enhancing lifelong learning. The quest of the University of Nairobi to pursue distance education and lifelong learning did not just start yesterday.

The history of distance and lifelong learning in Kenya and the University of Nairobi in particular, goes back to the establishment of the first
Department of Extra Mural Studies at Makerere University as far back as 1953 with the mandate of conducting open learning courses at community level. This department was expanded and upgraded over the years to become the Institute of Adult Studies.

In 1988, the institute was re-organized and re-structured and was renamed the College of Education
and External Studies (CEES) with three faculties which were later reduced to two Schools: School of Continuing and Distance Education and School of Education, respectively in 2005. The Centre for Open and Distance Learning was also created. The college through the two schools has over the years continued to carry out the mandate of distance and lifelong learning.
Recently the UoN established an Open, Distance and e-Learning Campus whose mandate is to support, guide, and facilitate the use of open learning, distance education, e-learning, blended learning, mobile learning and short lifelong courses at the University of Nairobi.
The UoN’s ODeL Campus mission is to enable access to quality education and training through robust, integrated and scalable technology platforms, skilled personnel and effective learner support services. Its vision is to be a world class hub for open, distance and e-learning.
The ODeL Campus has 12 regional learning centres across the country. The Centres are used to provide learner support services. They have library services, internet connectivity, tutorials, and helpdesk. The centres are situated in Mombasa, Garissa, Nairobi, Nakuru, Nyeri, Meru, Kisumu, Kisii, Eldoret, Kitale, Kakamega and Kitui.
Programmes offered in the centres range from certificate to postgraduate levels. They include: Adult Education and Community Development, Youth in Development Work, Business Management, Guidance and Counseling, Human Resource Management, Project Planning and Management, Peace Education, and Distance Education.
It is worth noting that the University of Nairobi is the only University in Kenya that trains staff in distance learning from certificate to PhD level. Its ODeL mode of delivery is novel, flexible, and convenient and will attract many youth and adult literacy learners. The availability of highly trained staff, a robust ICT infrastructure, content availability, a strong university brand and long
experience in ODeL are among the strengths of this University.

The University has adequate and dedicated human resources experienced in Open, Distance, Adult learning and e-learning. Over years the University of Nairobi has developed a critical mass of experts in distance learning.
Owing to this, Ladies and Gentlemen, the University has made significant contributions to the development of distance learning in Africa: for instance we have been instrumental in setting up structures and learning material for Open University of Tanzania; we have also played a big role in capacity building for distance and lifelong learning for Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Swaziland.
In Kenya, the University of Nairobi has contributed in building Open, distance and lifelong learning assets in both public and private institutions of higher learning.

It is my hope that this collaboration to organize this great workshop will be extended to more collaborative activities, particularly in carrying out research in the use of distance learning mode of
delivery in offering lifelong learning courses particularly for youth and adult literacy, especially enhancing access to learning opportunities for the less fortunate members of society.

Ladies and Gentlemen, a time has come for Universities to collaborate with development partners like UNESCO in Mobilizing Higher Education and distance learning assets, capabilities and
networks to support youth and adult literacy in Sub-Saharan Africa

Thank you and God bless you all.

PETER M. F. MBITHI, EBS, PHD
VICE CHANCELLOR
AND
PROFESSOR OF VETERINARY SURGERY