UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

ADDRESS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF PETER M.F. MBITHI DURING THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK SYMPOSIUM HELD AT THE UON TOWERS ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 13, 2017 AT 9.00 A.M.
The Board members of International Association of Schools of Social work,

Social Work Practitioners,

Social work students,

Invited guests

Ladies and gentlemen
Good morning! I wish to welcome you all to the University of Nairobi for this great academic forum where social work scholars, students and practitioners have met to freely discuss, exchange ideas and make significant decisions to build and further strengthen their profession.
I have been informed that the mission of the International Association of Schools of Social Work is:

1. To develop and promote worldwide excellence in social work education, research and scholarship in order to enhance human well being.

2. To create and maintain a dynamic community of social work educators and their programs.
3. To support and facilitate participation in mutual exchange of information and expertise.

This aligns very well with the mission of the University of Nairobi which is to provide quality University education and training and to embody the aspirations of the Kenyan people and the global community through creation, preservation, transmission and utilization of knowledge.
This knowledge must be utilized to address the diverse challenges that affect humanity while at the same time respecting their dignity and treating them with respect as human beings. In this regard, social work education plays a critical role in developing and nurturing a strong workforce for social service in our respective societies.
Our society is confronted by a multitude of challenges and problems of living. These are not only felt at individual, family and community levels but at the global level as well. In the Kenyan situation, existing socio-economic conditions affect human relations, create unmet needs and affect the aspirations of people if not well addressed.
The role of social workers in providing appropriate interventions for these challenges in all the said levels cannot be underestimated. They are better placed to give people hope, to speak against injustices that negatively affect their livelihoods, to champion for a just environment where people can live peacefully and to advocate for supportive social policies that facilitate the general well being of people.
This role cannot be fulfilled if social workers do not have sound training, skills and capacities to address such challenges. The training must also be regularly updated to match the new developments necessitated by social and technological change in our societies.

The training components are better improved when both social work educators and social work practitioners regularly share ideas on how well issues affecting people in their communities and
social life can best be addressed. This therefore, creates a need for the trainers and practitioners to have regular forums for the sharing of those ideas, which justifies the symposium that you are attending here today.

I therefore wish to encourage the social work practitioners to always bear in mind that the University is not just a place for training or a place to be feared but also a center where you can come for consultations and to obtain new
ideas on how best to improve the livelihoods of our people at the grassroots level. Similarly, social work educators must make greater efforts to liaise with the social work practitioners at the community level for additional practical ideas and strategies to deal with the issues affecting our society. This ‘two way’ knowledge sharing is crucial for holistic and sound interventions to make our society a better place to live.
More importantly, I challenge the social work scholars to document the discoveries that they generate through research and their interactions with the social work practitioners in order to have a sustained social work knowledge base which can easily be disseminated for use in the training as well as in practice of social work.
In all these, corresponding social work ethics must be observed for quality service to the service users of your profession. These are endeavors that the University of Nairobi is very much ready to support.

To the international social work scholars here today, be assured that we are ready for strong partnerships with your respective institutions in order to have a trained social welfare workforce that is well exposed to deal with the challenges
of humanity at the global level. We strive to be a world-class university that is committed to scholarly excellence. We therefore look forward to having more networks and partnerships geared towards building quality social work education for our respective societies.

It is my belief that your board meetings and sessions at the University of Nairobi have been fruitful. Take time to visit our country side, see more, and learn more from our people.
With those remarks, I now declare this International Social Work Symposium open and wish you all productive deliberations.

Thank You.

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