UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

REMARKS BY PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, DURING THE BOOK LAUNCH THEMED “THE GALLANT ACADEMIC: ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF H. W. O. OKOTH-OGENDO” HELD AT MANU CHANDARIA AUDITORIUM ON FRIDAY, MAY 19, 2017 AT 2.00 P.M.
The Honourable Attorney General,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,
We are gathered here this afternoon, to honour and celebrate a gallant scholar; the late Professor Hastings Winston Opinya Okoth-Ogendo. His diversified areas of contribution and service, not only in academia, but in other spheres of public service locally, regionally and internationally lends itself as nothing short of honourable.

His contributions to legal scholarship, institutional and national development in Kenya are indisputable. The late Professor Okoth-Ogendo served as lecturer and Dean at the University of Nairobi- School of law in the
late 1970s and early 1980s; was Vice Chairman Constitution of Kenya Review Commission between 2000 and 2005; served as Chairman of African Population Advisory Council board of directors, Insurance Appeals Tribunal, and was also a board member of the National Council for Population and Development, among other public service appointments.
This afternoon, we are indeed reminded of one of the great men that our country has produced, and who played a key role in shaping the institutional growth of our great University of Nairobi, our beloved country, the region and indeed the world. The University of Nairobi finds this forum to be of great importance, and we are therefore glad to be part and parcel of incubating it. Regrettably, we rarely honour and celebrate the achievements and contributions of these great men and women during their lifetime.
I became aware of the initial public lecture in honour of the late Professor Okoth-Ogendo in 2014 when I served as the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Administration and Finance). The University administration was then, as it is now, committed to actively support, facilitate and participate in the initiative. Today’s function is the second lecture which has evolved to include a book launch. We welcome this noble initiative, and are committed to facilitate other initiatives in honour and celebration of other great scholars in this country.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The commitment by the University administration is not discretionary; it stems from the University’s Mission, “…to embody the aspirations of the Kenyan people, and the global community, through creation, preservation, integration, transmission and utilization of knowledge.”

As part of honouring its commitment, the University has enhanced her infrastructure. You will appreciate, for instance, that we are today hosted on the 6th floor of this beautiful, recently commissioned historic
University Towers, an iconic university structure which is unmatched within East Africa. The university community wishes to thank the men and women who have contributed in various ways, to ensure the successful completion of this iconic architectural structure. At this point, I wish to mention that the university management is in the process of putting up the “School of Law Tower’ at the Parklands campus where the late Professor Ogendo taught until his untimely demise in April, 2009. The late Professor would, in my view, most certainly have been happy to
note, that the University of Nairobi continues to be ranked as one of the best universities in the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Kenya, and indeed the University of Nairobi, today celebrates Professor Okoth-Ogendo as one of the great leaders and mentors in the league of the late Professor Wangari Maathai. The sacrifices and contributions by these great men and women form a great bulk of the success story of our great university, our nation, region and the world. As we celebrate the sacrifices and contributions of these great scholars, let us always
remember to reflect on what contribution we have made for our future generations.

A key purpose for this gathering, therefore, as I understand it, is to reflect on the contributions of the late Professor Okoth-Ogendo, honour his sacrifices and contributions and witness the launch of the wonderful collection of essays in honour of the late Professor. I therefore urge you all, to empty your reserves of knowledge and experiences, and to equally fill them up with the enriching good practice that I sincerely hope we will all gain from this event.
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The celebration of our alumni and predecessors’ contributions and successes is something that we cherish. In this regard, the University management has over the years dedicated substantial resources towards building the required capacity of her staff, including through joint initiatives with other stakeholders, such as re-known international institutions. There is therefore, no excuse for any of our young academics not to get to even higher levels than our predecessors. I therefore take this opportunity to encourage our
young men and women to aspire and work towards scaling the heights of excellence, as the pace has already been set for all of us.

Let us always remember, as a continent, region and country, the great obligation that we owe to God and to our future generations to create, preserve, integrate, transmit and utilize knowledge. At the University of Nairobi, we are pleased to be play this key role.

We are therefore motivated by the strides that we are making as a University through the various initiatives
towards creating opportunities for our students and staff. Gone are the days when academia was deemed as dull and as having few prospects. Today’s academician is reasonably well remunerated and has an array of opportunities for personal development. We are committed to continuing to play our part towards giving momentum to this cause of seeking excellence in academia as well as the social arena.
Finally, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank the office of the Attorney General, the Judiciary, members of the academia and our great university, for making this event a success.

In a special way, I would like to thank the School of Law for conceiving, incubating and spearheading this process of actualizing the first and second public lecture in honour of a great scholar.

The university management looks forward to celebrating not just the late Professor Okoth-Ogendo,
but also many more great men and women who have greatly impacted on the socio-economic advancement of this great country, region and indeed the world through their commitment to scholarship.

Thank you and May God bless you all.

PETER M.F MBITHI, PhD, EBS

VICE-CHANCELLOR

AND

PROFESSOR OF VETERINARY SURGERY