UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

WELCOMING REMARKS BY PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI
VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, DURING
A MEETING TO DISCUSS PENN STATE’S INTEREST IN
ESTABLISHING A FOOD-ENERGY WATER (FEW) NEXUS
CLUSTER IN EAST AFRICA, HELD IN THE COUNCIL
CHAMBER, UoN TOWERS ON THURSDAY, MAY 18,
2017 AT 9.15 A.M.
Prof. Judy Wakhungu, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Environment

Prof. Michael Adewumi, Penn State’s Vice Provost for Global Programs

Distinguished Participants

Ladies and Gentlemen
I am very delighted to welcome you all to the University of Nairobi in this meeting to discuss Penn State’s interest in establishing a Food-Energy Water (FEW) Nexus Cluster in East Africa.

I want to begin by acknowledging that World-Class Universities engage in resolving global issues of our time, however, no single institution or even country can address of these challenges by itself. The most feasible approach in tackling these challenges is through sustained mutually beneficial strategic partnerships. Therefore, institutions that are either
global/world-class or aspiring to be must do it through strategic partnerships with like-minded institutions. It allows the partners to leverage their resources for the common good.

The second imperative is inter-disciplinarity. The most challenging problems of our time require interdisciplinary approach. Strategic partnerships allow partnering institutions to deploy their best from various disciplines to approach the issues. One of the universal challenges that we all face as humanity is how to manage our limited resources especially, water,
energy and food for sustainable development. The pressure on these resources is being dramatically intensified by climate change.

While most past efforts have been directed at each of these resources, not much has been devoted to the intricate relationship between the three: (water, energy and food). This is where the opportunity for progress lies. The focus of our discussion is precisely the intersection between these three, often referred to as the nexus.
I am informed that the goal of this meeting is to trigger debate and explore potential for a strategic partnership between the University of Nairobi and Penn State to focus on this nexus of water-energy-food. In order to forge such partnership, the first step is to have a convergence of the minds among stakeholders. We need to determine if our common interests are aligned and our willingness to work together.

I believe, the medium term goal is to then establish the thematic priorities for the partnership. This will go beyond the people assembled here today. It will require
the members of faculty from both institutions, via workshops and meetings focusing on joint training, research and capacity building in the near future. Together, they can define the local realities for each country and then come up with some broad priorities.

Following that, they should explore the implementing instrument, such as a joint center. The goal should be a Joint Center of Excellence focused on water-energy-food intersection with the following expected outcomes.
1. New knowledge that improves management of these critical resources.

2. Capacity building in the new area – to power the sustainable management of these resources

3. Critical engagement with communities in order to translate research to practice and

4. Translating knowledge to inform public policy for societal progress.

I wish to emphasize that our relationships should go much beyond MoUs. There could be MoUs with many
institutions but we are focusing on operationalizing and midwifing deep relationships. So, this is the beginning of a new day in Nairobi-Penn State relationship.
With those few remarks, I wish you a very fruitful discussion.

Thank you.

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VICE-CHANCELLOR
AND
PROFESSOR OF VETERINARY SURGERY