

## OPENING REMARKS

***Prof. Mabel Imbuga***

*Vice Chancellor Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (host institution)*

His Excellency Hon. Mwai Kibaki, the President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Kenya, Cabinet Ministers, Permanent Secretaries, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

I am delighted to address you during the official opening of this conference. It gratifies even more that Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology has been honoured with the opportunity to host this very important forum. Indeed, this gathering gives me fond memories of a very enriching experience during my participation in the Second GCHERA Conference held in July 2001 at San Francisco, USA.

On behalf of the entire community of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT), I wish to take this opportunity to warmly welcome you to the conference. I believe that the forum will provide the opportunity to examine various challenges facing universities offering agricultural training and research. We will also be able to share experiences and learn from one another and hopefully come up with concrete suggestions that will assist in addressing the hurdles we face.

Since its inception in 1981, JKUAT has played a pivotal role in the development of agricultural and technological development of Kenya and the wider region. Our Faculty of Agriculture - the oldest in the institution - has a track record of offering innovative solutions while addressing real challenges relating to food production, health and energy. Our graduates are to be found in all niches of the agricultural sector, being involved in production, extension services, generation of new knowledge through research and training at all levels.

As a public university, we are keen to provide the skills, knowledge and technology required to steer the country towards achieving the economic, social and political goals enshrined in national development instruments. JKUAT appreciates the global social dynamism and its impact on provision of higher education and is continually realigning its programmes to reflect the same. In this regard, we recently reviewed our strategic plan to align it to the national and international trends.

For JKUAT and other Kenyan universities, this conference could not have come at a better time. We are currently experiencing dwindling enrolment in agriculture-based programmes. This trend must be reversed to ensure food security and economic development. I am delighted that we have our counterparts from Wageningen University in the Netherlands and Pennsylvania State University from the USA, both institutions which have successfully reengineered their agricultural programmes to attract an increased student enrolment. We look forward to gaining from their experiences.

Apart from training, JKUAT is also keen on research and innovations, many of which happen to be linked to the sub-themes of this conference. For instance, to address the energy crisis, we are currently conducting biodiesel research. Also along the same

lines, pilot production of high-yielding rice and indigenous crops are ongoing. You will be able to see some results from these researches and many more when you visit the University.

Despite the enumerated areas of success and achievements, our institution continues to face various challenges arising from limited resource availability. It is no coincidence that the list of challenges we face paraphrase those identified by the founders of this consortium in 1998. Our involvement in GCHERA draws on the knowledge that by thinking globally, we can effectively act locally. Our institutional mission statement “*A university of global excellence of training, Research and Innovation for development*”, calls for close cooperation with international organisations in the areas of education and agricultural research.

During this conference, you will have the opportunity to visit our main campus, which is not far from the City of Nairobi. I in this regard, wish to extend my personal invitation while encouraging you to take advantage of the Kenyan sense of hospitality by interacting with our staff and students.

Thank you and welcome.