

GCHERA PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

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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.

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Global Consortium on Higher Education and Research for Agriculture (GCHERA), I wish to extend a warm welcome to all distinguished guests and participants to this conference. For us in the Executive Committee, the opportunity to witness high level intellectual discourse on pertinent agricultural matters is always a remarkable landmark worth looking forward to. More importantly, the gathering underlines the increasing importance of GCHERA as a key player on agricultural matters around the globe. The committee remains faithful to the fact that the best way for agricultural institutions of higher learning to offer service to the masses is to provide workable solutions to challenges faced by those in the farming sector, this including providing guidelines on better productivity.

Your Excellency the President, GCHERA was formed out of a realised need for a collaborative global approach to solving problems bedeviling agriculture in different parts of the world. This was based on the premise that bringing together researchers who had met varying experiences would most certainly help in alleviating the many problems that are continually experienced in the sector. And true to this vision, GCHERA has over the years assisted agricultural universities, especially in the developing world, to update their curricula to get to the level of those that have proved successful elsewhere. The papers to be presented in this conference are clear evidence of this. There will be presentations from different disciplines, all with great relevance to institutions offering agricultural courses. We are also going to experience a rich exchange of research findings and experiences, especially in form of innovative ideas in solving the critical problems of food insecurity, ill health, poverty, and energy crisis. Climate change is another matter of grave concern to the whole world and is becoming a fixture for urgent deliberations in several international forums. In this conference, we will have a chance of sampling the severity of the effects of global warming in different parts of the world. In the same breath, we will figure out how some nations have succeeded in reversing food and water scarcity even as the world in general continues recording and adverse dwindling of these resources.

Your Excellency Sir, I wish, like the earlier speakers, to underline the importance of this conference being held in African soil for the very first time. As we are all aware, Africa makes up most of the underdeveloped and developing world, with food security – not technological advancement – being the matter requiring urgent attention. The conference will provide a chance to universities from these nations and by extension the nations themselves, to draw useful lessons on how to improve agricultural productivity, and therefore food security. Alternatively, African agricultural institutions that have registered success in specific sub-sectors will be able to showcase the same in the

conference. Our continent, being extremely rich in biodiversity, also has much to offer to the rest of the world.

Your Excellency, my attention now turns to participants. I call upon all players in this conference to follow very keenly the experiences witnessed in other parts of the world and see how the same can be tailored to suit our local environments. For Deans of faculties of agriculture who are in the conference, please study with passion any resolutions that will be drawn with a view to exploring ways of improving curricula in our institutions - and making them responsive to the national and regional needs. Crucially, all training and research should at all times be tailored to the needs of the environments we operate in.

With those remarks I once again welcome you all. Thank you