

**Remarks by the Vice Chancellor, Prof. George Magoha during the Opening of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Student-Led Conference at the 8-4-4 Auditorium, College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, University of Nairobi on Thursday, June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2014**

---

*The Principal Secretary, State Department of Science and Technology,*

*USAID Kenya Representative*

*Principal, College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences*

*Colorado State University Team, led by Prof. Robin Reid*

*Deans, Faculty of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine*

*Chairmen of departments*

*Faculty members/teaching*

*Students*

*Invited guests*

***Ladies and gentlemen***

I am pleased to welcome you to open our 2<sup>nd</sup> Student Led conference at CAVS that is providing a platform for the students to present their research findings, research proposal for their thesis and dissertations and interactions with invited guests from development partners and practitioners.

Centre for Sustainable Dryland Ecosystems and Societies (CSDES) is a USAID funded partnership between University of Nairobi and Colorado State University under the Higher Education for Development Drylands Management Program supported through the US Presidential Initiative on Feed the Future (<http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/higher-education-development-drylands-management-program>)

CSDES is earmarked as a specialized centre of excellence at the University of Nairobi, whose main focus is drylands, with a mission of contributing to sustainable dryland ecosystems and improved livelihoods through innovative trans-disciplinary education, research, partnerships, policy dialogue and community outreach. CSDES is currently also collaborating with IGAD's Applied Research in Development Program as one of the Centers of excellence for drylands in the Horn of Africa. I also wish to note that University of Nairobi hosts the regional PhD in Dryland Resource Management Program under the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building in Agriculture (RUFORUM), a

consortium of 32 Universities in Eastern, Central and Southern Africa. The USAID financial support of the CSDES has created synergy with this regional program.

CSDES is also contributing to the quality of teaching, research and training through various short courses, experiential field course, seminars by practitioners and internship (industry experience) especially for students from pastoral areas.

UoN appreciates the role that CSDES is playing in complementing the university teaching training and research and outreach to the current and emerging challenges and opportunities for partnership with stakeholders in addressing national development agenda. I understand that CSDES is in the process of linking up with county governments in drylands to address human capacity and research gaps.

I wish to thank the Principal CAVS for nurturing the CSDES which is making great contribution to the University mandate in human capital development and research in drylands. UoN is committed to support the vision and mission of the Center.

On behalf of the University, I would like to thank all our partners, particularly USAID and Colorado State University, for the leadership and support they have continued to give to various programs at the University of Nairobi. I sincerely hope that USAID will continue to support the CSDES to upscale the transformative education and multidisciplinary research approaches for solving complex dryland problems.

I sincerely thank Prof. C. A. Suda, the Principal Secretary for State Department of Science and Technology for finding time from her busy schedule to open this conference.

Finally, I wish to thank the Principal, CAVS, Prof. Agnes Mwang'ombe and CSDES for hosting this 2<sup>nd</sup> student-led conference. I urge all faculties to continue supporting and mentoring students, and all students need to take full advantage of this conference and similar platforms to further their career goals.

It is now my pleasure to invite the Principal Secretary to address and open the conference.