

**SPEECH BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR, PROF. GEORGE A. MAGOHA, DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE BORLAUG LEADERSHIP ENHANCEMENT IN AGRICULTURE PROGRAMME (LEAP) ALUMNI ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE ON MARCH 4, 2014 AT CENTRAL CATERING UNIT AT 4.00 PM**

- Prof. Collete A. Suda, Principal Secretary, State Department of Science & Technology, Ministry of Education
- Ms. Sicily Kanini Kariuki, Principal Secretary, State Department of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture
- Dr. Ephraim Mukisira, OGW, Director General, Kenya Agricultural Research Institute
- Principal, CAVS
- Distinguished Guests
- All protocols observed
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to join you this afternoon, during the Borlaug leadership enhancement in Agriculture programme (LEAP) Alumni association event. It is indeed an honour for the University of Nairobi to host this very important occasion that celebrates the life and legacy of Dr. Norman Borlaug whose distinguished career exemplified the qualities of leadership, scholarship, scientific achievement, international cooperation, mentoring and passion.

On behalf of the University I extend my sincere gratitude to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) for the generous financial support accorded to various projects within the University and the country at large. I especially want to thank USAID for supporting the dryland development programme (Centre for Sustainable Dryland Ecosystems and Societies) at the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences. I am aware the Borlaug LEAP program which awards fellowships to outstanding graduate students to nurture future leaders in food security related disciplines is also being supported by USAID through Feed the Future program. As a University, we appreciate your efforts that are geared towards improving livelihoods.

I have been informed that the Borlaug LEAP is launching a chapter in Kenya. I wish to state that the University of Nairobi (UoN) will collaborate with the Kenyan Chapter to develop and nurture leadership qualities in the agriculture sector for the improvement of food security in the country.

**Ladies and gentlemen**, the theme of this event 'Higher education for development and food security' is very befitting to the current Kenyan scenario. The country, especially the arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) which constitutes about 89% of Kenya land mass, continues to face various development challenges which include; climate change and variability, loss of ecosystem resilience, land degradation, loss of biodiversity, land fragmentation, land tenure and land use changes, conflict over natural resources, increasing vulnerability of dryland livelihoods droughts and floods and loss of access to global markets.

If deliberate attempt is not directed to managing impacts of climate change/variability, majority of poor farmers and pastoralists especially in the ASALs will continue to face higher food insecurity, household incomes, environment and natural resources will be degraded further, leading to declining agricultural production, reduced assets, escalating poverty levels and increased vulnerable climate change and variability.

As a University, we acknowledge that the country relies on institutions of higher learning to provide the human capital required for sustainable solutions. To this end, the University through the various academic programmes has been working towards addressing issues in agriculture in order to enhance food security in Kenya's vision 2030, and more specifically, the National Food and Nutrition Security Policy of 2011.

**Ladies and gentlemen,** we cannot talk of achieving food security and development in the country without concerted efforts by all stakeholders, UoN has been partnering with various international, regional and national institutions, such as CGIARS, IGAD and Kenya agricultural Research Institute (KARI) to build capacity and enhance food security.

It is my hope that the Borlaug LEAP Fellows discussions will contribute to renewed thinking on how to transform agriculture through enhanced leadership. We appreciate Borlaug LEAP's efforts in strengthening the capacity of institutions of higher education to produce leaders to address food security concerns in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

On behalf of the University, I would like to thank all our partners, particularly USAID, for the leadership and support they have continued to give to the University for Implementation of higher education for development initiatives. I appreciate Prof. C. A. Suda, principal Secretary for State department of Science and technology and Ms. Sicily Kaniani Kariuki, Principal Secretary, State Department of Agriculture, for gracing the occasion.

My sincere gratitude goes to all participating Universities, CGIARs, NGOs and KARI. I trust that this collaboration will grow. I call upon other development partners to continue supporting higher education institutions for improved human capital for research and development innovations in food security and poverty eradication in Kenya and Sub-Saharan Africa.

I wish to sincerely thank the Borlaug LEAP team for convening this important event and launch the Borlaug LEAP Alumni Chapter in Kenya. I acknowledge the USAID-HED supported Drylands Development Partnership Program between Colorado State University and University of Nairobi at the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences for providing logistical support for the conference.

With these remarks, I take opportunity to wish you a fruitful event.

Thank you.