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**REPUBLIC OF KENYA**

**MINISTRY OF EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY AND NORTHERN CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT**

**REMARKS BY HON KEN OBURA, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY; MINISTRY OF EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY AND NORTHERN CORRIDOR DEVELOPMENT – KENYA; DURING THE OPENING SESSION OF THE REGIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP ON QUALITY SUPERVISION OF POST GRADUATE STUDIES ON 23RD APRIL 2018 IN KIGALI, RWANDA**

**The Minister for Education of the Republic of Rwanda;**

**The Executive Secretary of the Inter University Council of East Africa;**

**Staff of IUCEA;**

**Distinguished trainees;**

**Deans of Post Graduate Schools and Faculties;**

**Ladies and Gentlemen;**

**All protocol Observed**

I am pleased to join you this morning as we start off this training that has been tailor made to discuss the issue of quality supervision of post graduate students. The quality of supervision in our institutions of higher learning is a critical issue as it is the key transitional point from the ordinary learners to human resource that can be innovative; generate knowledge and prefer solutions to the various challenges that we face in the society.

Whereas every year, and even twice a year in some institutions, we release so many graduate and post graduate students to the market, the feedback from the industry as well as the frustration of prolonged job search and discouraged job seekers give a disturbing scorecard to the players in this industry.

As a result, the issue of an effective academia- industry fit has continued to be a topic of discussion at both the regional and more aggressively at the national level. Any time the issue of unemployment is discussed, the assertion that graduates are half baked, that skills that universities produce do not precisely respond to the industry needs, or that the university administration do not engage industry adequately in course design usually arise.

Ask the students and the response is: ‘simply say yes to whatever the supervisor says. After all, all you need is a certificate. If you argue, you will never graduate’

This scenario is worrying for us in government just as it is to other stakeholders, because besides the immense investment that all stakeholders make in terms of time, money and other opportunity costs, the deficit of postgraduate skills to analyze and develop policy models that spur positive growth often leads to wrong application of taxpayers’ resources.

Indeed, even though we have liberalized the EAC market for trade in goods and services, we can only secure our service market for ourselves if we have highly skilled human resource who will design solutions that will give us both comparative and competitive advantage in the region.

We need human resource that can easily benefit from technology transfer component that we have integrated in all our capital projects and who will subsequently trigger a multiplier effect within the region. This can only be realized if we build the skills for problem identification, undertaking research, writing and modeling as well as in micro economic analysis, in a critical mass of our students.

Indeed, one of the key economic aspirations of the EAC Partner States is to transform our economies into modern and industrialized status and to become middle income and knowledge-based economies by 2020 and, also, attain prosperity for all of us by 2050.

In this regard we are aware of and laud the efforts that IUCEA has made towards executing its mandate including the development of a Regional Qualifications Frameworks; development of benchmarks for curriculum design in Business Studies; facilitating the mobility of learners, lecturers and researchers; and in mobilizing resources for the establishment of centres of excellence in universities across the Community. These efforts led to the declaration of the EAC as a Common Higher Education Area in May 2017.

The EAC Common Higher Education Area strives to bring together our sovereign states' mutual interests and common goals through a higher education system characterized by comparable, compatible, coherent and harmonized qualifications and standards with the aim of improving the international competitiveness and attractiveness of our region's higher education and to ensure mobility and employability of our youths across the region.

The transformation of the EAC into a Common Higher Education is of great and significant impetus to our industrialisation agenda, because, as has been proven beyond doubt there is an intimate link between development of knowledge systems and the practical workings of systems of production.

To this end we are keen to ensure that skills held by middle cadre workers and top engineers and entrepreneurs enable us to innovate and foster the type of rapid technological progress that we need for industrial development.

While all these frameworks play a great role in making us a common education area, the issues of disparity in investment and costing of education continue to deny access to our students across the region. I therefore urge IUCEA to step up efforts towards concluding the framework for harmonization of fees to enhance access to quality and affordable education.

As I conclude Ladies and Gentlemen; let me reiterate that as a region we are fully cognizant that it is only our human resource that will facilitate the realization of our vision of a strong, independent and progressive society. We do fully rely on our institutions of higher learning to nurture such capabilities as will make us develop homegrown solutions to our realities.

I am therefore glad that with the support of German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the Inter University Council of East Africa has designed this programme. It is my hope that at the end of this training we will have reevaluated our methodologies and work towards adopting approaches that will ensure that we release competitive post graduate competences to guide our socio- economic development. Let me also commend the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA) for the crucial role it continues to play in this area, and for helping in organizing such a crucial event in our region. Count on our support anytime.

With these few remarks, it is now my pleasure to wish you all, a very productive engagement during your deliberations.

Thank You!