

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

VICE CHANCELLOR'S SPEECH AT THE 3RD AFRICAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE OF VICE CHANCELLORS AND DEANS OF SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY HELD AT SPEKE RESORT HOTEL MUNYONYO, KAMPALA, 23RD - 26TH NOVEMBER 2009.

The Right Honourable Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda
Honourable Minister of State for Higher Education,
Honourable Members of Parliament present,
Your Excellencies, the Ambassadors,
Vice Chancellors from other African Universities,
Deputy Vice Chancellors,
Deans from Various Academic Institutions,
All Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen

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I am greatly honoured to welcome you to the third Regional Conference of Vice-Chancellors and Deans of Science, Engineering and Technology (COVIDSET). In a special way, I welcome the distinguished participants from various countries to Uganda. I also hope that you will get an opportunity to visit Makerere University campus in particular and other parts of the country in general.

Makerere University is the official host of this edition of COVIDSET which is organised by the African Network for Scientific and Technological Institutions in Africa (ANSTI). In this noble task, Makerere University was joined by Busitema University which is one the five public universities in Uganda. I acknowledge their support and wish to recognise the presence of my colleague, the Vice-Chancellor of Busitema University, Professor Mary Okwakol.

The theme of COVIDSET 2009 is ***Revitalizing Science and Technology Research and Deployment for Sustainable Development in Africa: Strategic, Policy and***

Regulation Challenges. It has been strategically coined to recognise the outputs of previous conferences, which were held on the issues of education, specifically the “State of Science and Technology Training Institutions” (COVIDSET 2005) and “Science and Engineering Education for Sustainable Development” (COVIDSET 2007). Educational Institutions in Science and Technology are major assets in the economic development process. This conference has attracted several S&T institutions from all over Africa.

Makerere University recently inaugurated a new strategic plan in which it renewed its commitment in actively participating in the development process of Uganda and the continent by redefining the knowledge generation and sharing paradigm. The new plan whose theme is ***repositioning Makerere University to meet the emerging development challenges*** has disposed of the ***ivory tower*** paradigm and emphasises ***knowledge transfer partnerships*** paradigm. This shift is informed by the realisation that much as knowledge, technology and skills reside in universities like Makerere, the community, public and private sectors also command knowledge bases from which universities can learn and leverage their entrepreneurial and innovative capabilities. Knowledge production and transfer between universities and the broad public and private sectors is supposed to be a two way traffic that calls for cultivation and fostering of symbiotic relationships.

In addition, the University has decided to shift from teacher centered instruction to learner centered pedagogy in order to produce graduates with problem solving skills and reflective ability; to place a premium on research so as to focus on knowledge production.

Uganda’s increasing shift to a knowledge economy has provided Makerere University the opportunity to prioritise research as a strategic thrust that will generate the requisite knowledge to power Uganda’s economy. In return, the university is establishing knowledge transfer conduits with the public and private sector in a fashion that provides benefits to the sectors and to the university.

It is of great benefit for my institution, and indeed for all institutions participating in this conference, that COVIDSET 2009 aims at dwelling on the issue of science and technology research and its deployment to serve society.

I want to thank the guest of honour, the Right Hon. Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda, represented by the honourable Minister of State for Higher Education, for honouring our invitation. I thank Prof. Joseph Massaquoi the director of ANSTI; Prof. Albert Magoha, the VC of Nairobi University and chair of ANSTI Governing Council; The Head of ANSTI Secretariat, Mrs. Mary Matemu; UNESCO; the Netherlands Government and the various partnerships for organising this conference. I thank you distinguished delegates for coming to participate in this conference. I thank the local organising committee chaired by Dr. Vincent Ssembatya for coordinating the various inputs in this event. My colleague, the vice chancellor of Busitema University has consistently played a great role in the organisation of this conference. Finally I thank the Government of the Republic of Uganda for the requisite financial support to the university.

I now take the honour to invite the Right Hon. Prime Minister of the Republic of Uganda to address the delegates and to officially open this conference.

Thank you.