



**SPEECH BY PROF. STEPHEN AGONG', PhD, FAAS, VICE-CHANCELLOR,
JARAMOGI OGINGA ODINGA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY, ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMISSIONING OF
THE MOLECULAR & MICROBIOLOGY LABORATORY HELD ON
MONDAY, 20TH JUNE, 2022 AT THE MAIN CAMPUS, BONDO**

- **Our Chief Guest, The Principal Secretary, State Department for University Education & Research, Amb. Simon Nabukwesi**
- **The Ag. Chief Executive Officer, National Research Fund, Dr. Jemimah Onsare**
- **The Team from the Ministry of Education**
- **The National Research Fund Board members and staff**
- **Invited guests**
- **Members of staff present**
- **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am deeply delighted to join the entire Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology fraternity as we Commission this state-of-the-art Molecular and Microbiology Laboratory.

Let me thank the National Research Fund for the cordial relationship that we have had over the years and for the grant which has enabled us to equip our laboratory.

I thank the entire University fraternity including the researchers whose hard work, dedication and commitment has been demonstrated here today in the quest to uplift our university.

To Our Chief Guest, JOOUST continues to position itself as a premier institution of higher learning, offering market driven academic programmes for sustainable socio-economic development. Drawing from Kenya's rich cultural heritage and utilizing vast natural resources around us, JOOUST is strategically endowed as a center for transformative academic advancement, research and outreach. The University continues to provide market driven academic programmes designed to meet Kenya's socio-economic needs.

The commissioning of this Molecular and Microbiology Laboratory signifies the fact that the University consistently supports research and development activities in order to strengthen research culture and build capacity in science, technology and innovation for both staff and students.

The University will keep pace with a rapidly evolving Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) sector by accelerating the development of critical infrastructure for ST&I including equipping the teaching and research laboratories with modern scientific equipment, building capacity for researchers on grant proposal writing, creating awareness on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR), nurturing creativity and innovation and enhancing avenues for dissemination of research output.

To our Chief Guest, this state of the art research laboratory is a unique one and one of its kind in Western Kenya funded to the tune of Kshs 33 million. Over 95% of the allocated funds have been used to procure various pieces of equipment to support the key function of this laboratory. COVID-19 pandemic came with a

myriad of momentous challenges. It is just a simple virus but even carrying out testing and epidemiological survey was difficult. KEMRI became the pillar and cornerstone to help the various medical facilities spread all over the country.

Institutions of higher learning were therefore challenged. I am glad to note that JOOUST was never left behind. Apart from implementing the government directives to curb the spread of COVID-19, researchers in JOOUST developed various disinfecting agents including sanitizers, bleach, and hand wash which have gone through the approval bodies such as KEBS and are certified to be safe for human use. All the products are named JOOUST ROYAL.

The institution never stopped at that. We went to the community to determine the deterrents of mass testing for COVID-19. It was observed that the available method of sample collection was too invasive and scary, thus causing stigmatization across the population. The team, therefore, thought of a complementary method of sample collection for the detection of the SARS-CoV-2 and wrote a proposal that attracted international funding through NRF-South Africa.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, with a vision of becoming a beacon of excellence in training and research, competing fairly well with other universities locally and internationally, JOOUST desires to align its training programmes and research projects to national goals that spur the growth of relevant sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, engineering, information, communication and technology as well as health and contribute to the achievement of the country's Vision 2030.

JOOUST is therefore strongly committed to the future and is making positive improvements to facilities and infrastructure to ensure that it becomes one of the top universities in teaching and research in the country and beyond.

The State Department of Education, has supported expansion of infrastructure that is, however, not sufficient, going by the rapid expansion of student numbers in the University. More facilities are still required to support state of the art research and teaching.

The University aims to build sustainable local, regional and international partnerships and networks for research and infrastructural development in the relevant areas of food security.

Ladies and gentlemen, in its' ten years of existence, the University has made key positive leaps including the rapid growth in programmes and student numbers. The University is a Centre of Excellence in Africa courtesy of its significant achievements in research and innovation. Equally, it has experienced its fair share of challenges and setbacks such as limited resources and operating in a highly competitive and dynamic environment. However, in pursuit of excellence, growth and development, the University is focused on developing strategies that ensure it remains competitive in discharging its mandate.

Since we were chartered, the University has made a major milestones in enhancing professionalism and offering of quality services to our stakeholders within our surroundings. To be a premier University that is globally visible in knowledge generation and technological innovations we are called upon to enhance efficiency and offering of quality services.

Finally, let us individually and collectively commit ourselves to working together as a team to make our University the beacon of excellence in university education and research as espoused in our Vision.

Thank you and God bless you!