

**OPENING REMARKS BY VICE CHANCELLOR, PROF. STEPHEN AGONG', DURING
THE JOOUST DISABILITY DAY HELD ON 12th and 13th FEBRUARY 2015 AT
JOOUST SPORTS GROUND**

Hon. Mohammed Gabow, CEO, National Council of Persons with Disabilities,

Our Chief Guest, Dr David Sankok, Chairman, National Council of People with
Disabilities

The Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research Innovation and Outreach,

Deputy Vice Chancellor, Planning, Administration and Finance,

Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs,

The Chairman, Disability Mainstreaming Committee,

Our Partners, Sponsors and all Schools represented,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking Hon. Mohammed Gabow and our Chief Guest, Dr. David Sankok, for accepting our invitation to grace this occasion as we mark this year's Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology Disability Day.

Thank you for taking time off your busy schedules to be with us on this important day. Let me also acknowledge the organizers of this event; the Disability Mainstreaming Committee.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm very pleased and honored to be here this morning to address you on this auspicious occasion as we mark the JOOUST Disability Day. This is the day that we reflect on the important task of trying to improve the lives of people with disability, particularly throughout our region.

In 2010, Kenya adopted a constitution that outlines policies to protect the rights and interest of people living with disabilities. But the law of the land has remained true only on paper. In reality, Kenyans with disabilities face harsh and sometimes cruel challenges. Even in the 21st century, the birth of a disabled child is rarely welcomed or celebrated in some Kenyan communities.

People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities have for long remained dependent on their parents and the society at large for their existence. What they

have not got, and what they yearn for, is respect, self-confidence and support. People with disabilities represent an untapped source of skills and talent, including technical skills if they have access to training, and transferable problem-solving skills developed in daily life.

The JOOUST DISABILITY EVENT recognises the fact that persons with disabilities form a core group in the society that offers a substantive contribution to national development. This event specifically aims at sensitizing

members of the community on issues around People with disability and providing assistance to them.

The University recognises that challenges faced by PLWDs can meaningfully be minimized by events such as this that aims at bringing them together, to sensitize them and provide a forum for creating awareness by involving different stakeholders on issues that relate to them.

People living with Disabilities have converted our approach from asking to be hired out of sympathy to marketing themselves as a significant employee pool,

and a consumer pool as well. This is the legacy of the disability civil rights movement.

As the American writer William Arthur Ward once said, "A true friend knows your weaknesses but shows you your strengths; feels your fears but fortifies your faith; sees your anxieties but frees your spirit; recognizes your disabilities but emphasizes your possibilities."

It is about time we break our stereotypical prejudice against people with disabilities and start recognizing them as 'differently-abled'. We need to provide

them with opportunities instead of sympathy, appreciate their efforts and give them the dignity they deserve in this society! This year's theme has captured this in no better way than stating that "We need Opportunity not sympathy."

May I therefore take this opportunity to welcome and appreciate your presence by assuring you that JOOUST's obligation to care for its residents is offered unreservedly without prejudice to all that live in it. We at JOOUST are proud to celebrate such recorded achievements as demonstration of our commitment to ensuring that the rights of persons with disabilities are implemented and

protected through the dedication and commitment of selfless people who have internalized the challenge of reaching out and making a difference in the lives of the deserving. Thank you very much for those who deal with persons' mind not with their body senses and remember always that verily, it is not the eyes that grow blind, but it is the hearts which grow blind.

I would like to particularly thank the following schools and Organizations who have taken their valuable time to be a part of this event and share this special day with us:-

1. Sabatia Eye Hospital
2. Maranda Special School
3. Nyamonye Small Home for Physically Handicapped
4. Nyangoma School for the deaf
5. St. Oda, Aluor
6. Kayieye Special School
7. Mundika School
8. Nina Special School
9. St. Mary's Nyangoma
10. Maiany Special School
11. Sega Special School

12. Equator Round Table School
13. Saradidi Special School
14. Lutheran Special School
15. The Ministry of Education
16. The County Government of Siaya

I thank the innovation and hard work of all officials from the said schools and commend you for the effort and dedication you have displayed to make this day a huge success. The climax of this two- day event will be displayed tomorrow

with the sports and Talent Demonstration by the various Schools represented here.

At the end of the two days event, it is expected that there will be: provision of opportunity for PWDS to exhibit talents to all participants; Provision of specialist assessment and intervention services for PWDS (Free examination/Assessment); Formation of collaboration and networking among stakeholders in the area of Disability; Enhancement of Sensitization and Creation of Awareness of issues of Disability as a process towards the

realisation of the rights of persons with Disabilities within and without the University; Enhancement of knowledge, skills and positive attitudes and practices for practitioners in the area of Disability and special Needs and the community in general; Provision of information and communication to all stakeholders in all aspects pertaining to PWDS and Kick start the process of affirmative action to ensure JOOUST achieves the 5% reservation for PWDs in recruitment, promotion and training.

With this few remarks I would like to invite the CEO of The National Council of People with Disabilities, Hon. Mohammed Gabow.

Thank you and God Bless you!