

**CLOSING SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY AND HIGHER EDUCATION
HON. DR. PIUS Y. NG'WANDU (MP)**

Mohamed Shein, Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania;
SUA Council Chairman,
Your Excellencies, High Commissioners, Ambassadors and Representatives of
Diplomatic Missions,
Vice Chancellor,
Members of the Business Community,
Representatives of Government Ministries and Parastatal Organizations,
Representatives of other Public and Private Universities,
Members of the Academic Staff,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank you for giving me the honour of officiating the closure of this important event which has brought together various Stakeholders of Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA). These have included members of the business community, non-government organizations, government and parastatal organizations, researchers, academicians and policy makers. This diverse composition of participants, I believe must have given you a very effective forum to deliberate on achievements, constraints and future implementation strategies of the SUA Corporate Strategic Plan. I would therefore like to congratulate all the conference participants for their productive participation they have shown during the conference. I believe the conference has been very resourceful to the participants and has met the expectations of both the organizers and the participants.

Mr. Chairman, I am informed that at this conference five key papers were presented and discussed at length. Looking at your conference programme, the papers have covered issues of training, research and development, outreach, information and communication technology, and income generation. I am encouraged by your interest in addressing these very relevant issues to higher learning institutions and our national development. However, I want to throw challenges to SUA with regard to these issues.

Training

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to learn that SUA has been increasing the number of degree programmes as well student enrolment in the course of implementing its Corporate Strategic Plan. This is a commendable

achievement towards the need to expand the higher education sector in Tanzania to keep pace with the expansion in secondary education. One challenge I want to throw to SUA is to ensure that the expansion of student enrolment goes hand in hand with provision of more practical and entrepreneurial skills to students. Students with practical and entrepreneurial skills can play a better role in the development of agriculture as well as the management of natural resources. I also believe that your graduates can employ themselves as farmers if you provide them with practical skills on agriculture and entrepreneurial skills which they can use to bring change in agricultural production.

Research and outreach

Mr. Chairman, I am sure the conference had ample time to discuss the role of SUA in the development of improved agricultural and natural resource management technologies. I urge you to ensure that you translate your research efforts and findings into action so as to improve the living condition of the rural community. For rural communities where there are limited opportunities for socio-economic development, eradication of poverty can only be achieved by increasing agricultural productivity through research. For that matter, Sokoine University of Agriculture, has to be at the forefront in the battle against poverty through research undertaking.

SUA cannot assist the country to win the battle against poverty if researchers formulate their research projects based only on what they think is researchable for the sake of publishing academic papers. Speaking of agriculture in its broadest sense, farmers need low cost soil fertility improvement technologies, high yielding seed varieties, improved livestock breeds, better crop and livestock husbandry practices, effective extension service and effective marketing systems in order to improve their productivity. I therefore call upon SUA to focus on conducting research which addresses on the following aspects:

- (i) Production of appropriate technological package oriented towards solving rural community and farmers problems
- (ii) Sustainable use of natural resources and increased productivity while at the same time ensuring protection of the environment.
- (iii) Poverty reduction and improvement of food security and household income.

These are challenges which SUA and other agricultural research institutions in the country have to address in order to assist the poor to improve their quality of life.

Weak research-extension-farmer linkage is one of the reasons given for the poor state of our agriculture productivity. It is high time for SUA to establish an effective mechanism to ensure timely transfer of improved technologies to the farmers. I am pleased to learn that SUA has already disseminated a number of agricultural technologies to the farmers. These include new bean varieties called SUA 90 and "ROJO", introduction of improved dairy goats, rainwater harvesting technologies, rodent control and agro-forestry technologies. These are a few examples of SUA's research outputs which are being used by farmers and it indicates that you are well poised for your future tasks. The challenge is to gather pace and move forward with increased vigour.

Information, Communication Technology (ICT) and Income Generation

Mr. Chairman, my last few challenges to SUA are on the issues of ICT and Income generation. I understand SUA is making efforts to maximize the use of ICT facilities for training, research and outreach activities. ICT is important not only in enhancing your training, research and outreach activities but also in accelerating our country's development during this millennium. Therefore, in addition to promoting the use of ICT by SUA staff, it is time to get concerned about producing graduates who can use ICT to meet new challenges in their own businesses and at their work places.

Mr. Chairman, efforts to improve and sustain training, research, outreach activities as well as acquiring ICT facilities require financial resources beyond those which can be provided by the government. I am pleased to note that you have taken ample time during the conference to discuss strategies of mobilizing financial resources to complement government funding. These include opening investment opportunities to the private sector in the form of lease or partnership. I commend you for showing willingness to open investment avenues for the business community rather than competing with the private sector in running businesses for which you have little or no comparative advantage. SUA should engage itself in income generating activities which are consistent with University's mission and should be able to support the University's role of training, research and public service or outreach. Your efforts to generate income should go hand in hand with efforts to increase efficiency and reduce costs of training, carrying out research and providing services to the public.

Mr. Chairman, I understand the conference has come up with recommendations. I look forward to receiving a formal copy of these recommendations. It is my hope that efforts will be made to ensure that the experiences gained at this conference and the conference proceedings that will later be produced reach as many relevant stakeholders as possible.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to assure you that the government will continue to give SUA institutional and financial support for the purpose of improving teaching, research, outreach and ICT facilities.

Once again, I wish to express my pleasure for being given the honour of officiating the closure of the SUA Stakeholders Conference. May I at this juncture join hands with you in thanking conference organizers, Diplomatic Missions which have sent representatives to this conference. May I also thank all donors who are supporting training, representatives of government, parastatal organizations and universities who have attended should be commended for their active participation with the hope that they will facilitate the improvement of teaching, research, outreach and ICT facilities at SUA.

Mr. Chairman, with these few remarks, let me now declare the First SUA Stakeholders Conference is now formally closed.

Thank you for your attention.