

**VOTE OF THANKS BY THE CHAIRMAN OF SUA COUNCIL  
AMBASSADOR NICHOLAS A. KUHANGA**

Your Excellency, Dr. Ali Mohamed Shein, Vice-President of the United Republic of Tanzania;  
The Minister for Science, Technology and Higher Education, Honourable Dr. Pius Y. Ng'wandu (MP);  
Your Excellencies, Representatives of Diplomatic Missions;  
Distinguished Representatives of Government Ministries, Parastatal Organizations and Members of the Business Community;  
Members of the Academic Staff;  
Invited Guests;  
Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the Sokoine University of Agriculture and on my own behalf, I wish to take this opportunity to express my very sincere gratitude to Your Excellency for accepting our invitation to come and officiate the opening of this first Stakeholders' Conference. Your acceptance to officiate the opening of this Conference in person, despite your busy schedule, is a clear testimony of the importance you attach to the advancement of higher education in this country.

Your Excellency, allow me at this stage to thank you for your opening address which is not only challenging but also sets new milestones for the University to achieve. Let me assure you that the issues raised therein will be the basis of our deliberations at this one day conference.

Your Excellency, one of the biggest challenges the University is facing is the constrained students enrolment. Currently, the University's annual enrolment averages at 47% of the qualified applicants. This trend is similar to what pertains in other public Universities in the country, an aspect which makes Tanzania (18,500 University students) lag behind Kenya (72,000 students) and Uganda (35,000 students). According to the Corporate Strategic Plan, the University was expected to have a student population of 4,000 by the year 2005. This target may not be realized unless there are serious and deliberate interventions by the Government and other stakeholders to support the University. The main reason for the constrained students enrolment is the lack of adequate teaching space and facilities, utilities as well as library. The little expansion that has been achieved has a direct bearing on the decision by the Government to allow the University utilize the former Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College, effective October, 1992. I wish to place on

record my very sincere gratitude to the Government for ultimately transferring the ownership of this facility to SUA effective 1997. However, the teaching facilities at both Main Campus and Solomon Mahlangu Campus are now fully utilized and there is little or no room to accommodate additional students.

The University has been making great efforts to acquire additional training facilities including workshops, laboratories and teaching space without much success. We shall continue banking on the Government to be supportive in this endeavour.

Your Excellency, your challenge on the need for the University to produce graduates with the necessary skills cannot be overemphasized. The University has recently (2001) reviewed the curricular of all the undergraduate programmes with a view to producing graduates with particular set of skills, knowledge and attitudes. Emphasis has been put on producing graduates who are committed to working in rural areas. Most important, the graduates should be able to work both in the formal and informal sectors including self employment. To be able to do this, SUA will continue to work in partnership with other stakeholders to improve the learning environment and in particular facilities for practical training.

Your Excellency, the weak triangular linkage between research-extension-farmer is a challenge to all researchers and extensionists in the country. However, it is a challenge in response to which SUA is expected to play a leading role as an institution of higher learning with the mandate of agricultural research and providing services to the public. Apart from the establishment of Institute of Continuing Education and SUA Centre for Sustainable Rural Development as institutional mechanisms for transferring improved technologies to farmers, the University now puts more emphasis on on-farm and farmer participatory research. Some of the success stories pertaining to research and extension linkages include the development of new seed varieties such as SUA 90 and "ROJO" bean varieties, introduction of improved dairy goats, rainwater harvesting technologies, rodent control and agro-forestry technologies. SUA has the potential to undertake more research and extension services given the necessary resources.

Your Excellency, in your speech you have also touched on the issue of information and communication technology which is critical in improving training, research and outreach activities at Sokoine University of Agriculture. SUA has ICT facilities in place and has plans to improve the facilities so that

they can widely be used for training, research and outreach activities. The University is taking deliberate steps to ensure that ICT is developed for teaching purposes through video and electronic links as well as for students academic records, finance and human resource management, library information systems and general administration.

Your Excellency, income generation is one of the core objectives of the Corporate Strategic Plan to the year 2005 and beyond. This is important so as to complement government funding in order to sustain its training, research and outreach activities. I am pleased to inform you that necessary steps have been taken by University towards using the University resources to generate income. The University Council has already approved policy guidelines and has deliberately invited the business community to this Conference in order to give them opportunity to explore possible areas of partnership, assistance and investment.

Your Excellency, we have seriously taken into account all the challenges you have given to SUA and I would like to assure you that the University will work in partnership with all the stakeholders to achieve its objectives in teaching, research and service to the public.

On behalf of the Conference participants and on my own behalf, I once again wish to thank you very sincerely, for accepting to come and officiate the opening of the first Stakeholders' Conference in person.

I thank you for listening.