

SPEECH BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, STATE DEPARTMENT FOR ECONOMIC PLANNING, MR. JAMES MUHATI CBS DELIVERED ON WEDNESDAY 14TH FEBRUARY 2024 DURING THE AFRICA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY, VICE CHANCELLOR INTALLATION CEREMONY

The University Chancellor,

The Vice-Chancellor,

The Chair and Members of the Board of Trustees,

Distinguished Chair and Members of the Governing Council,

Members of the Senate,

The Management Board,

Dedicated University Staff and Students,

AIU Alumni,

Distinguished Guests,

All Protocols Observed,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning

It is a great pleasure to stand before you today at the installation ceremony of the new Vice-Chancellor of the Africa International University. I extend my heartfelt gratitude for the warm welcome and the privilege of addressing this esteemed gathering.

As we gather here today, let us reflect on the crucial role that educational institutions play in the development of a nation. Education is the cornerstone upon which the future is built.

The Africa International University (AIU) holds a distinguished place in the academic landscape, not only within Kenya but across Africa and the global community. For four decades, AIU has been a driving force in education,

investing in the intellectual and holistic development of countless individuals. Today, we witness the culmination of this commitment with the installation of a distinguished alumnus, Rev. Nelson Makanda, PhD.

Let me take this early opportunity to congratulate you, Dr. Makanda, for your appointment and installation as the 3rd Vice Chancellor of the AIU. You have an uphill task ahead of you, but you have the government support as you navigate the management of this institution.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The State Department for Economic Planning, is responsible for formulating, coordinating, and overseeing economic development plans, policies, and strategies. As the Principal Secretary, I recognize the critical interplay between economic planning function and academia as decisions made in economic planning have profound implications for the educational landscape.

The Kenyan Government is keen on investing in people through provision of quality and affordable education thus developing the country's human capital in an inclusive and sustainable manner. Accordingly, human capital development is identified as one of the areas that can enhance the country's competitiveness and trigger economic transformation as articulated in the Kenya Vision 2030, the Fourth Medium Term Plan and the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA).

In particular, continuous **investment and protection of human capital** is important for socio-economic development. Statistics shows that Kenya has the highest human capital index in mainland Sub-Saharan Africa. However, more needs to be done to ensure those entering the labour market have the skills that the market is looking for. A skilled labour force is a key priority to enhancing production and accelerating socio-economic transformation.

Consequently, the relevance of a university is determined by the programmes it offers and how relevant the programmes are to the current economic, industrial, and technological situation of the country and the world. AIU needs to produce graduates who will not solely depend on white collar jobs after graduation, but graduates who can adapt and innovate. The job market demand

for white collar jobs is not expanding, and hence the graduates should be all-rounded including readiness to take up blue colour jobs.

I commend AIU for its commitment to diversify its academic programs, reflecting an understanding of the dynamic needs of the market. By offering a diverse range of market-driven academic programs, AIU is not only preparing students for the challenges of today but also equipping them to excel in the ever-changing landscape of tomorrow.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As we navigate the intersections between economic planning and academia, collaboration and open dialogue becomes imperative. Addressing concerns such as student debt and access to education is crucial. Economic downturns may result in reduced public funding for higher education, impacting tuition costs and student loan programs. It is important to collectively tackle these challenges to ensure equitable access to quality education.

The alignment of government priorities with research focus is of essence. Economic policies directly influence government budgets, impacting academic institutions' ability to conduct vital research and provide high-quality education. The evolving economic landscape may also shift priorities, influencing the areas of research that receive funding and support.

There is therefore need for collaborative efforts between the State Department for Economic Planning and academic institutions to ensure sustained support for research initiatives and educational programs. I urge AIU and other academic institutions to stay adaptable, aligning their research agendas with emerging national needs and global trends.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The globalization of education is an undeniable reality. Economic factors shape the international mobility of researchers and students. In an era where collaboration knows no borders, there is need to work together to foster an environment that encourages the global exchange of ideas and talent. AIU has taken substantial strides in fulfilling this commitment through its strategic collaboration with the Kenyan government and the global community. The

university has extended its influence globally by hosting students from diverse nationalities, providing them with an enriching educational experience.

This collaborative ethos is also evident in AIU's engagement in joint research initiatives, exchange programs for both students and staff, and a collective effort to facilitate the global exchange of knowledge and skills. These ventures align seamlessly with the Kenyan government's priority of promoting economic growth through education.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I commend AIU for its commitment to its core mandate and its dedication to offering a transformative environment. As we look towards the future, I encourage continued collaboration between the State Department for Economic Planning and academic institutions, including AIU, to ensure that policies empower and uplift the next generation of leaders, thinkers, and innovators.

Let me once again, convey my best wishes to Dr. Makanda as he assumes office as the new Vice-Chancellor of Africa International University.

Thank you.