

SPEECH BY PROFESSOR GEORGE MAGOHA, EGH, CABINET SECRETARY,  
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE MURANG'A  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON  
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ON 3<sup>RD</sup>  
NOVEMBER, 2021

Distinguished Guests,

Colleagues,

Researchers,

Murang'a University of Technology Fraternity,

Conference Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you this morning to open this Conference on “Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development”. I am pleased to see many scholars and innovators gathered here. I appreciate the time you have spent to prepare and participate in this important Conference.

The theme of this conference aptly captures the spirit and direction of the Government's Vision 2030, as emphasised by the Big-4 Agenda. The Kenya Vision 2030, which aims to transform Kenya into a newly industrialised, middle-income country, once fully implemented, will ensure quality life to all its citizens. I note with satisfaction that the five conference sub-themes are all linked with the Government priorities under the Big-4 Agenda and are relevant to the current discourse on the world stage.

As you may be aware, conferences are significant vehicles for researchers to stay connected to others in their field and learn about cutting-edge scholarship. They are supposed to bring together a complex network of academic and non-academic professionals to discuss and disseminate new knowledge. We should also recognise that the practice of conferencing includes activities that go beyond just information exchange. Conferences provide social spaces which enable researchers to meet with other researchers, establish new contacts, explore new ideas, and initiate useful collaborations. Indeed, a convergence of minds provides a unique forum for scholars in this country and across the globe to dialogue, network and share knowledge in various fields of science and technology. Therefore, if well organised and conducted, academic conferences can yield an abundance of scientific and societal impacts.

Technology and innovation, which are the central focus of this conference, bring skills, knowledge, technique, and tools together for solving the problems of human beings, making their lives easier. Technology is important today because it is driving the world to make it better. Indeed, we are currently bounded with technology in our day-to-day activities. Because of this, industries and businesses are rapidly growing globally. Education and communication systems, for example, are becoming more and more digitised and advanced. Softwares such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet are changing the styles of study and communication. The importance of technology in human life today cannot, therefore, be gainsaid.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to emphasise the importance of science, technology and innovation (ST&I) in the social and economic development of our country. We know how technological innovations have played a critical role in spurring growth in Europe, Japan and USA. These countries continue to dominate in Research and Development. Likewise, the success of the newly industrialised countries like Brazil, China, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea is attributed to heavy investments in science, technology and innovations. This is a clear pointer that investment in research and development of new innovations are crucial if any country is to grow and sustain its economy. Indeed, it is clearly established that science, technology and innovation are a major driver for poverty alleviation and economic advancement in any nation. It is with this in mind that the Government of Kenya initiated a system-wide reform agenda that introduced the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) that focuses on equipping students with a broad knowledge base, an aptitude for creativity, and the capacity to master new knowledge. The Vision of the CBC is to prepare learners who are engaged and empowered with world-class standards in education, skills and knowledge acquisition. The mission of the curriculum is to nurture every learner's potential, and to promote social, economic, technological and industrial needs. To this end, therefore, we ask universities to make themselves adequately ready for the new system since they are central in providing the needed human capital critical to the implementation of the curriculum, as well as the research ideas that will improve its delivery within our context.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Covid-19 pandemic has left many economies across the globe battered, and Kenya is no exception. Implementing measures, such as travel restrictions and closure of public spaces, to curb the spread of the virus has led to negative economic impacts on businesses and workers. Universities and other institutions of higher learning have not been spared by these disruptions. The Covid-19 pandemic has also shown us that it is important to develop and implement new technologies, including digital tools for virtual conferencing. So, for University to survive and sustain training, teaching and learning, they must embrace technology.

Let me assure you that the Ministry of Education will play its part in facilitating and creating an enabling environment for the private and public sector educational institutions to utilise available ICTs.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government recognises that there are inadequate strategic collaborations and partnerships between institutions of higher learning and the industry. To address this, the Ministry of Education has developed a framework for consultative and participatory partnerships in scientific and technological fields. This is expected to enhance and promote collaborations and partnerships in research and development, and to build a knowledge management and dissemination system.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To meet the global challenges that confront us, we must involve the active participation of scientists as well as experts in humanities and social sciences, some of whom are gathered here today physically and others virtually for this conference. We have high expectations that, after your deliberations, you will come up with workable solutions that would tackle global challenges, such as climate change, pandemics and increasing demand for the world's resources. Needless to say, universities are at the heart of finding ways in which our countries will respond to these challenges, and satisfy our societal aspirations for equality, development and growth.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, I wish you a successful and fruitful engagement in this Conference. With these remarks, it is my pleasure to declare this Conference officially opened.

Thank you.