



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**REMARKS BY PROF. PETER M.F. MBITHI, DEPUTY VICE-  
CHANCELLOR (A&F) DURING THE COLLEGE OF  
BIOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES HEALTH AND  
SAFETY AWARENESS DAY ON WEDNESDAY 6<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2007**

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The Principal, CBPS  
Deans and Directors  
Chairmen of Departments  
Staff and Students  
Other invited Guests  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to join this college and participate in your Health and Safety Awareness Day. It is gratifying to note that the college has taken the lead in organizing such a day, something that other colleges should emulate.

As you are aware, the University constituted Health and safety committees in all its colleges, including SWA and Central Administration early this year. These committees are

supposed to spearhead the process of setting up systems and structures to address matters of Health and Safety in their respective colleges and Units.

In March 2007, the University jointly with the Directorate of Occupational Health and Safety Services organized a four day training for all members of the training committees to equip them with the necessary skills to tackle issues of health and safety.

The University regards matters of health and safety seriously and has taken definite steps to enhance awareness among staff and students on their roles in handling them. It is the responsibility of the University to promote a safe and healthy workplace by implementing effective systems to prevent occupational diseases and accidents, ill health and damage to property in order to reduce the cost of production and improve productivity.

In the 2006/2007 Performance Contract between the University and the government, the University set as one of its performance indicators, the target of addressing safety measures in all campuses. This target has been retained and enhanced in the 2007/2008 University of Nairobi Performance Contract to be signed with the government later this month.

In the new Performance Contract, among other undertakings, the University intends to fully embrace and continue to conform to the highest Health, safety and environmental standards through ensuring that we have functional lifts, installation of fire extinguishers, clearly marked 'No Smoking' signs and clearly marked emergency exit points. The University has also undertaken to train security and caretaker staff on how to use emergency facilities, fire fighting equipment and basic first aid procedures.

Some of these activities may sound very ordinary but you will be surprised how many among us, even those present here, do not know how to use a fire extinguisher or a fire hose pipe, even where such facilities exist and are functional. You can imagine a situation where in case of fire, all people are running away because none of them know how to use the extinguisher!

The matter of working lifts has already been earmarked for action by the University and last year, a new lift was installed at the Main Administration building. The next building to be considered is the Gadhi Wing and a lift has already been procured and is awaiting delivery and installation. Other buildings to follow, mostly at Main Campus, are the JKML Library (to repair stalled/faulty lifts), and the Education Building.

But the matter of Health and Safety is not the domain of the University Management alone. All staff and students have a duty to participate for indeed, they are the beneficiaries of a healthy and safe environment. For staff in particular, provision of effective services for the prevention of occupational accidents, diseases and damage to property is crucial in order to enhance the quality of working life and ensure decent work and better productivity in all areas.

When the work place hazards are appropriately monitored for the purpose of preventing accidents, diseases and damage to property, both the University and its staff stand to benefit. Such benefits include:-

- Preventing loss of productivity directly or indirectly arising from the accidents or diseases.
- Saving on the probable expenditure on the injured persons and damaged property.
- Stopping unnecessary pain and suffering of the injured persons.
- Having a good image that is now recognized as an important factor in the international market.

These issues are particularly relevant in a college like CBPS, which has a high concentration of laboratories and workshops, and where accidents are prone to happen due to use of machinery and drugs.

Let me conclude by indicating that if we want to reduce accidents, injuries, illnesses and their related costs, everyone must place as much emphasis on safety and health issues as they place on other core issues, including teaching and research. To be most effective, safety and health must be balanced with, and incorporated into other core University business. A sick community, or one working in a hazardous environment cannot be expected to be productive.

The University must take care of the health and safety concerns of its workforce for the workforce to effectively enable the University to meet its objects and functions.

With those remarks, it is now my pleasure to declare this Health and Safety Awareness Day officially open.

Thank you.