



REMARKS MADE BY PROF. PETER M. F. MBITHI, DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE) DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 7TH ADVANCED TRAINING PROGRAMME OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF MEDICINAL PLANTS FOR AFRICAN COUNTRIES, HELD AT THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE BOARDROOM, COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES, ON NOVEMBER 2, 2009

The Vice-Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Prof. George A. O. Magoha

The Vice-President of Tianjin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TUTCM), Prof. (Ms) G. A. O. Xiumei

The Dean of International College, (TUTCM), Prof. XU Li

Other officials of the Chinese Embassy present

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (AA), Prof. J. T. Kaimenyi

The Principal, CHS Prof. I. O. Kibwage

Invited Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with pleasure that I join our Vice-Chancellor in welcoming officials of the Tiajin University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TUTCM) and those of the Chinese Embassy in Kenya to the University of Nairobi's College of Health Sciences, and in particular, the School of Pharmacy.

This training programme is part of the activities being undertaken within the context of the current Memorandum of Understanding between TUTCM and the University of Nairobi.

As you may be aware, among the functions and objects of the University of Nairobi as contained in the University of Nairobi Act (1985), the first one is "to provide directly, or in collaboration with other institutions of higher learning, facilities for University education, including technological and professional education, and for research". The MOU between TUTCM and the University of Nairobi is in furtherance of this objective.

Within the framework of the quoted MoU, the two institutions have undertaken to do the following:

- **To have a training programme of mutual interest and benefit to both Universities that will further their training and research objectives in a manner consistent with their status as non-profit educational institutions;**
- **The University of Nairobi be the one to host a training programme on Research and Development of Medicinal Plants;**
- **To have up to 25 trainees as participants per training session, normally to be conducted in the month of November.**

I can confirm that as part of its responsibilities, the University of Nairobi is ready to provide a lecture room, laboratory space and the required equipment for the training.

Whereas majority of our people use conventional or “hospital” medicine, many communities especially in the rural areas still use traditional medicines. Indeed, the role of traditional medicine in the healthcare of communities in Africa, Asia and China has been recognized throughout history. Further, there is now growing recognition of the important role traditional medicine plays in overall healthcare delivery even in developed countries such as USA and Europe.

In the developed countries, popular use of traditional medicine is fuelled by concern about the adverse effects of chemical drugs and greater public access to health information through ICT facilities, among other reasons. Conversely, it is also a fact that many conventional medicines are directly or indirectly derived from natural sources.

Since the potential of traditional medicine as a source of new drugs is rich and largely unexploited, there is need to carry out research on traditional medicine in order to produce cheap, reliable, home grown solutions to our health care problems.

While pursuing this, the major challenge facing us is the general skepticism by some of our health care professionals about traditional medicine, especially regarding quality, safety and efficacy. In Kenya, many people cannot tell the difference between a traditional medicine man and a witchdoctor.

I am informed that Tianjin University of Traditional Medicine is one of the earliest Universities dedicated to training in Traditional Chinese Medicine. It means we have a lot to learn from them.

I therefore join hands with the rest of the UoN fraternity in welcoming TUTCM trainers to the University of Nairobi, and hope that this training is only the beginning of a long collaboration between TUTCM and the UoN.

Thank you very much.