



**SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. WILSON KIPNGENO; (Ph.D.; MBS) DURING THE OCASSION OF 2<sup>ND</sup> CROSS COUNRTY EVENT HELD ON SUNDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH, 2019**

The president – Athletics Kenya

Invited Guests,

Deputy Vice-Chancellors,

Deans,

Directors,

Deputy Registrars,

Staff and students,

All participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure for me to welcome and join you today in this very important event of the 2<sup>nd</sup> UoK South West Mau Cross Country. I pay glowing tribute our partners who have sponsored this auspicious event in whatever manner of their contribution.

The theme for this year’s event is: **Saving “Mau” for improved wellbeing**”; with the following objectives:

- 1) To save the Southwest Mau Forest Ecosystem as a National and International Heritage
- 2) To enhance environmental conservation awareness for healthy living
- 3) To enhance well-being and healthy life style among the young, adult and elderly people

- 4) To showcase talent
- 5) To enhance peaceful coexistence among Kenyans.

Ladies and gentlemen, during last year's inaugural event of the 1<sup>st</sup> UoK Cross Country, seven hundred local and international athletes took part in various events officiated by Athletics Kenya. There were over three thousand spectators. On that day, over one thousand eight hundred (1,800) donations of seedlings were planted in various locations; of which over 1,300 grew.

As we enter this second annual event which was preceded by a pre-event conference, exhibition and demonstrations on Friday, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019, we celebrate a milestone in saving a gigantic resource in our country, which must be guarded jealously in order to attain and sustain quality lifestyles for our people.

We also invite you to participate in the various categories of races which besides nurturing talent for our youth. It will also provide opportunity for various age groups to establish a culture of physical activity. As we are continuously becoming aware, hypo activity leads to deteriorating health while continuous physical activity improves personal health and cuts down the prevalence of non-communicable diseases.

It goes without saying that not all of us (not even two) will win the top prizes. However, a sport is a universal language. It unites even the most divided of nations (5<sup>th</sup> objective). We have always been united in cheering our athletes across geographical regions, language groups and political affiliations.

Similarly, I want to urge our youth and National athletes to avoid the devil's machinations in the name of use of performance enhancing substances so that we can avoid bringing to shame our national pride in athletics and abruptly ending the careers of our budding athletes.

As many of us are aware, degradation of the Mau is a disaster that threatens our very own existence. Let us use this opportunity to educate those who wish to negatively explore this mega resource that our lives can turn around through saving it and to practically demonstrate to them that the benefits of conserving it far outweigh the reckless destruction that may be visited on it.

I wish to unreservedly thank the Local Organizing Committee for a job well done in creating the necessary infrastructure required for placing this venture on an indestructible path and along with them, all parties which have partnered with us on this journey to Save the Mau.

Once again, Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to welcome you all to the South West Mau in general and to the University of Kabianga in particular and wish you a healthy competition cum interaction and learning opportunity. I encourage athletes who have previously performed exemplarily to seek courses to pursue in our University in order to act as role models for upcoming athletes as wider option to joining our national uniformed service men and women and hasten to mention that they can do so even as they serve in the forces.

May the best athletes win as the rest enjoy the thrill of competition. All of us are winners in this event.

Thank you.

**PROF. WILSON KIPNGENO**  
**VICE-CHANCELLOR**