



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

ADDRESS BY THE DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR,
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS, ON THE LAUNCH OF THE
'PATHWAYS TO AFRICAN FEMINISM AND
DEVELOPMENT', A JOURNAL OF THE AFRICAN
WOMEN'S STUDIES CENTRE HELD ON 31ST MAY,
2013 AT THE EDUCATION THEATRE II, MAIN
CAMPUS, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

Honourable Ms. Martha Karua

Principal, CHSS

Director, Women Studies Centre

All Protocols observed

Ladies and Gentlemen

It has indeed been an honour to be part of this momentous occasion as we launch the Journal of the African Women Studies Centre titled *'Pathways to African Feminism and Development'*. The Centre has realized great achievements during these past two years. The journey has been long but its culmination is a source of joy for all of us. I welcome you all.

The establishment of the African Women's Studies Centre (AWSC) has been a journey, a journey that is worthwhile. The Centre addresses the need to have special focus on African women and women of African descent in order to bring their views and

perspective into mainstream academic and policy dialogue. The process towards the establishment of the Centre received the full backing of the women and men at the University.

The focus of the Centre, is to bring the African women's knowledge to visibility, through academic and policy debates in our academic institutions and other fora at the national and regional levels. In addition, the Centre takes cognizance of the important linkage between women of Africa and those of African descent but living in other parts of the world. The Centre also recognizes that, in our

region, we continue to refer to and use theories and frameworks whose basic assumptions do not include African women's worldview. Theories of power, political and other, need to be interrogated from the African women's experiences point-of-view.

One of the core values of the University of Nairobi is to promote and advocate for freedom of thought and expression.

It is worth to note that the University bears a moral responsibility in shaping a nation's agenda. First, it is important from a moral perspective since it

educates and trains our future community and business leaders, teachers and policy makers.

Second is that it pursues academic discourse from a practical point of view as it is exceptionally equipped to help solve the daily challenges of a nation through innovation in teaching and learning. It also extends to students and future leaders the intellectual tools for doing that. This means that universities influence the standards for political leadership throughout a nation and even shape the global nation formation.

The multidisciplinary approach has become an important approach in modern discourse as it involves many related disciplines and creates teams of scholars that enrich the overall scholarly experience. It involves drawing appropriately from multiple disciplines to redefine problems outside the normal boundaries and reach solutions based on a new understanding of complex situations. Even though it faces challenges by the long established tradition of highly focused professional practitioners that has cultivated a protective boundary around their area of expertise, I urge the scholars to break away from this practice and engage in multi-

disciplinary studies as these are geared towards holistic development of scholarship and enrichment of professional bodies.

While on this path of nation formation, we realize that 'Pathways to African Feminism and Development' will apply a multidisciplinary approach, bringing together scholars from different disciplines like Law, Political Science, Literature, and Sociology, among others.

As scholars, the importance of research in academics cannot be gainsaid. It leads to applications that

directly benefit the people of a state and beyond. Without research, we would not be able to transform an unstable nation into a stable nation, shortage into plenty, still into movable. To a large extent, it enables scholars to actively transform our nation and our natural, social, and individual worlds for the better.

Indeed, African Women Studies Centre seeks to take the discussion on feminism as a theory and its applicability in development further by the launch of *'Pathways to African Feminism and Development'*, a journal that is dedicated to academic thought

This Journal of the African Women Studies Centre will discuss a culture that has portrayed women as inadequate beings, the existence of male brokers whom women have to negotiate through for power, illiteracy, diversity which has fractured women's unity, a question of tactics and strategy and denial of identity.

Ladies and Gentlemen I am happy to say that the journal has a most able chief-editor. Prof Patricia Kameri-Mbote is the founding director of International Environment Law Research Institute and she is well known lawyer and a defender of

women rights, not only in Kenya but globally. her contribution to the academic world is immense.

The dominant hindrances for the development of the African woman have been noted to be lack of economic power and development, real or perceived traditional practices based on the patriarchal model, scarcity of resources and competition, the plural system of law which allows for the practice of religious, customary and state law that do not have the interests of the woman in mind, the role of theory in the portrayal of women and the women's voice which is not affirming who the women are. To

achieve development, feminism needs to be integrated in all socio-political and economic sectors of the state.

These topical discourses and others which have emerged with the passage of time forms the centre of discussion in this new journal of the African Women Studies Centre which ladies and gentlemen, I have the honour of launching.

May the Journal grow to contribute to, and shape the feminist thought for the development of Africa and the world.

Thank you and God bless you.