



Regional Initiative in Science and Education (RISE) Annual Conference: Imperial Royale Hotel, Kampala, Uganda: Friday 14th October, 2011

Theme: Integration of Science and Technology Research Networks in national and regional development through University-led Initiatives

Speech by Hon. Minister of State for Higher Education during the opening of the Annual Conference

Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome all of you to Uganda as we host the annual Carnegie RISE conference for AFRICA. Africa is at a critical time.

The population is exploding, unskilled people are so many, production is low, jobs are scarce, food is scarce, the environment is degrading, energy is scarce, water is scarce, and yet, Africa is a major target for foreign investment.

Therefore, with globalization and regional integration surrounding everything we do, Africa needs to embrace Science and Technology as a key tool and driver for development. You Universities must walk to the challenge!

A key strategy to globalised challenges is adopting partnerships, collaboration and networks. That is why I am so pleased and thank full to you all that have made these networks to function. We are very thankful to you the Carnegie Corporation of New York and your partners. Please, keep this fire!

For long, Universities have been detached from the realities of communities they serve! You are supposed to help transfer transformative innovations, technologies, knowledge and skills to the communities.

I am however, pleased that to some extent, there seems to be a rush for ‘taking universities to communities’ and one of the reasons for this has been exposure to networks and partnerships with the academics, private sector and governments working together, even across national borders to share advice and approaches to challenges.

Economies are driven by industrialization, but this cannot happen without S&T, which in turn drives knowledge and discoveries. Public bodies and governments must be ready to invest in applied and high-end basic research with a view of transforming it to meet the challenges of the last man in the community.

The Government of Uganda is actively promoting scientists and their discoveries. We have passed laws to regulate patents and copyrights. These University research networks should be sure that our laws recognize their discoveries and this will economically empower and motivate scientists.

We are happy that development partners are actively innovating approaches and models that can be benchmarked and supported by government.

Uganda has a medical association, a child malnutrition unit, an agriculture research institute, a forestry research center, and a cotton research station in Kampala. An animal health research center and the Geological Survey and Mines Department are in Entebbe. Makerere University has Colleges of science, agriculture and forestry, technology, medicine, and veterinary science. Mbarara University of Science and Technology has faculties of medicine and science education. In 1987–97, science and engineering students accounted for 17% of college and university enrollments. In the same period, expenditures on research and development totaled 0.6% of GNP; 21 scientists and engineers and 14 technicians per million people were engaged in research and development. With policy shifts towards S&T, most of that has doubled now and we are looking towards more advances. With partners like Carnegie and their well-tested model of S&T networks, the future is bright.

Government will continue to facilitate and coordinate the development and implementation of policies and strategies for integrating Science and Technology (S&T) into the national and regional development process.

We need scientists to work together in an interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary manner. The success of the Universities and their S&T networks lies in the strength and expertise of their membership and their ability to mobilize scientific experts to continually advise government policy makers and other stakeholders.

Government will continue supporting activities that contribute towards improving the prosperity and welfare of all in line with the national and regional development commitments.

I am informed that at least one of the RISE Networks, the African Natural Products Network (AFNNET), has its secretariat anchored at Makerere University, in the College of Veterinary and Biosecurity Sciences. This is a welcome development. The proactive nature of this college has particularly been encouraging. The veterinary college has in many ways been proactive in engaging with government. We have many other initiatives including skills and technology incubation with the Vet College. Institutions should go this Way.

Finally, Uganda has many good things and beautiful sceneries. For those of you who are from outside Uganda, take few more days to enjoy the gifts of nature in the pearl of Africa.

I once again thank you all dear participants especially the organizers and all those that have made this conference a reality for all you input.

With that, I declare the conference open and pray that what whatever is discussed here forms a brick in building national and regional development.

For God and My Country

Hon Minister of State for Higher Education