

**SPEECH BY PROF. STEPHEN .G. AGONG', PHD, FAAS, VICE
CHANCELLOR, JARAMOGI OGINGA ODINGA UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY DURING THE JOOUST
DISABILITY DAY ON FRIDAY 17TH MARCH, 2017 AT THE
SPORTS PAVILLION**

Hon.Dr. Hussein Mohammed Gabbow, Director National Council of persons
with disabilities,

Representative, County Government of Siaya,

The Deputy Vice Chancellor, Research Innovation and Outreach, Prof. Benson Estambale,

Deputy Vice Chancellor, Planning, Administration and Finance, Prof. Washington Olima,

Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs, Prof. Joseph Bosire,

The Disability Mainstreaming Committee members,

Our Partners, Sponsors and all Schools represented,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by thanking the Director, National council of persons with disabilities Hon. Dr. Mohammed Gabbow for accepting our invitation to grace this year's Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology disability day.

I would also like to extend heartfelt appreciation to all the guests who have taken time off their busy schedules to be with us on this important day. Let me

also acknowledge the sponsors of this event ,The National Council of persons with disabilities, MFI Document solutions, Gulf Lab Chemicals, Shrend Publishers, Coca Cola and Safaricom who have helped make this day a huge success; to the disability mainstreaming committee, indeed despite the challenges we have been facing in our Institutions, you undertook to soldier on with preparations for this day with much success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is an annual event set aside as a University to celebrate the abilities of people with disabilities and reflect on the important task of trying to improve the lives of people with disability, particularly throughout our region. The aim of observing this day each year is to increase awareness, and understanding, of disability issues, and the gains to be derived from the integration of people with a disability in every aspect of life. The celebration of this day is an important tool in promoting the rights of people with a disability.

In 2010, Kenya adopted a constitution that outlines policies to protect the rights and interest of people living with disabilities. But the law of the land has remained true only on paper. In reality, Kenyans with disabilities face harsh and sometimes cruel challenges. Even in the 21st century, the birth of a disabled child is rarely welcomed or celebrated in some Kenyan communities.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities have for long remained dependent on their parents and the society at large for their existence. What they have not got, and what they yearn for, is respect, self-confidence and support.

People with disabilities represent an untapped source of skills and talent, including technical skills if they have access to training, and transferable problem-solving skills developed in daily life.

This day recognises the fact that persons with disabilities form a core group in the society that offers a substantive contribution to national development. This event specifically aims at sensitizing members of the community on issues around People with disabilities and providing assistance to them.

Our chief guest,

The University recognises that challenges faced by people living with disabilities can meaningfully be minimized by events such as this that aims at bringing them together, to sensitize them and provide a forum for creating awareness by involving different stakeholders on issues that relate to them.

As a University we have embraced inclusivity into our daily activities. We encourage people with disabilities to pursue their daily activities and pursue similar roles as their peers who do not have a disability. This involves more

than simply encouraging people; it requires making sure that adequate policies and practices are in effect.

People living with Disabilities have converted our approach from asking to be hired out of sympathy to marketing themselves as a significant employee pool, and a consumer pool.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the American writer William Arthur Ward once said, "A true friend knows your weaknesses but shows you your strengths; feels your fears but fortifies your faith; sees your anxieties but frees your spirit; recognizes your disabilities but emphasizes your possibilities."

It is about time we break our stereotypical prejudice against people with disabilities and start recognizing them as 'differently-abled'. We need to provide them with opportunities instead of sympathy, appreciate their efforts and give

them the dignity they deserve in this society! This year's theme has captured this in no better way than "Towards an inclusive society."

May I therefore take this opportunity to welcome and appreciate your presence by assuring you that JOOUST's obligation to care for its residents is offered unreservedly without prejudice to all that live in it. We at JOOUST are proud to celebrate such recorded achievements as demonstration of our commitment to ensuring that the rights of persons with disabilities are implemented and protected through the dedication and commitment of selfless people who have

internalized the challenge of reaching out and making a difference in the lives of the deserving.

I would like to particularly thank all the participating schools and organizations who have taken their valuable time to be a part of this event and share this special day with us. I would like to commend you for the effort and dedication you have displayed to make this day a huge success.

Our chief guest,

At the end of the event, it is expected that there will be: provision of opportunity for people living with disabilities to exhibit talents ; Provision of specialist assessment and intervention service (Free examination/Assessment); Formation of collaboration and networking among stakeholders in the area of disability; Enhancement of sensitization and creation of awareness of issues of disability as a process towards the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities within and without the University; Enhancement of knowledge, skills and positive attitudes and practices for practitioners in the area of disability and

special needs and the community in general; Provision of information and communication to all stakeholders in all aspects pertaining to people living with disabilities and to kick start the process of affirmative action to ensure JOOUST achieves the 5% reservation for PWDs in recruitment, promotion and training.

Ladies and gentlemen,

With this few remarks I would like to invite the Director National Council of Persons with disabilities, Dr. Mohammed Gabbow.

Thank you and God bless you!