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OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE

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PRESS RELEASE

Famous African Poet, Prof. Jack Mapanje to visit Makerere University's Literature Department

On 12th March 2013, the Department of Literature at Makerere University will host one of Africa's most accomplished poets, Professor Jack Mapanje. The Professor's poetry works such as *Of Chameleons and Gods*, *Skipping without Ropes*, *The Last of the Sweet Bananas* and *Beasts of Nalunga*, are taught at the Makerere Literature Department and the world over.

Professor Jack Mapanje was jailed without trial for three years, seven months and sixteen days by the Government of Malawi because of his first book of poems: *Of Chameleons and Gods*. His literary work which criticized Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda's dictatorial regime was also withdrawn from circulation in schools and colleges by the Malawian Ministry of Education. During his time of imprisonment, the Professor was declared a prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International. He has been a visiting Professor at Leeds University, at Newcastle Upon Tyne University, at University of York, at York St John University and is now on a sabbatical year at University of Botswana. He has held many research and writer's residencies.

Commenting on Professor Jack Mapanje's visit to Makerere University, Dr. Susan Kiguli, the Head of Literature Department said: "It is almost impossible for us as a Department that teaches his work to explain how so happy we are to have him here at Makerere University specifically the Literature Department. To be able to tell our students that this is the writer of *Of Chameleons and Gods*, *The Chattering Wagtails of Mikuyu Prison*, *Skipping without Ropes*, *The last of the Sweet Bananas*, *The Beasts of Nalunga* and *And the Crocodiles are Hungry at Night*. Now we can say to our students: this person is the writer of cheeky sassy humorous verse against dictators, vampires, the mean spirited, the chameleons and the self appointed self imposed gods and this is the man who skips with his hope."

Professor Mapanje will recite some of his poems to the Literature students at the College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT) Conference Hall. He will also have the opportunity of interacting with the students both from the Literature department and secondary schools. There will also be a question and answer session between the Professor and the students.

Professor Mapanje is a Malawian by birth and has managed to achieve a number of awards from his writings. In 1988, he was awarded the Rotterdam Poetry Award, in 1990 PEN/Barbara Goldsmith Freedom to Write Award, and in the year the 2002 African Literature Association (USA) Fonlon-Nichols Award. Prof. Jack Mapanje is also a fellow of the University of London.

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