

The Vice Chancellor's Address at the 2nd Eastern African Literary & Cultural Studies Conference

Main Hall, Makerere University, 20 August 2015

- **The Guest of Honour, Prof. Charles Olweny**
- **Members of University Management Present**
- **Principals, Deans and Chairs of Departments**
- **Officials and representatives from the various partner Institutions**
- **Colleagues from the University of Stellenbosch and the University of Nairobi**
- **Distinguished Guests from foreign missions**
- **Our Esteemed Sponsors**
- **Invited Guests in your various capacities**
- **Conference Delegates**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

.....

I feel greatly honoured to welcome you to Makerere University for this opening ceremony of **“The 2nd Eastern African Literary and Cultural Studies Conference”**. You are all most welcome and we thank you for gracing this occasion as we celebrate literary scholarship in Africa. I take this opportunity to welcome all our guests from outside Uganda. In a special way, I welcome our Guest of Honour, Prof. Charles Olweny, formerly Vice Chancellor of Uganda Martyrs’ University. He is also a renown scholar and academic. His recent autobiography, *A Rolling Stone*, gives an insight into his life and times during the 60s and 70s. We are very pleased to welcome you as Guest of Honour, a task that you very well deserve.

Ladies and Gentlemen, although this is only its second edition, the Conference represents the passion and determination of the humanities and social sciences academics and scholars from across the region and beyond to create a platform *in the region* for reflecting on socio-cultural and political issues, which are significant to understanding our historical and contemporary realities.

This dialogue is indeed very critical towards achievement of social transformation and development of our nations. This is the goal of all our efforts as institutions of higher learning.

Indeed the conference fits directly into our mission “to provide innovative teaching, learning and services responsive to national and global needs. One of our core functions is partnerships and networking through knowledge production and transfer between universities and the public and private sectors.

I am therefore happy to note that this conference is a product of collaboration between several institutions including Makerere University, Stellenbosch University and the University of Nairobi. It is my hope that going forward, more collaborations and partnerships in the humanities and social sciences will be created and harnessed towards broader and deeper conversations and engagements.

Mr. Guest of Honour, this conference affords us a platform for reflecting on the challenges, opportunities and possibilities that exist in our region. The conference is an opportunity to reflect on and generate knowledge on the issues affecting our region from humanistic and social science perspectives.

I am glad to note that Makerere University has been instrumental in fostering debates around literary and cultural studies issues. The Department of Literature or the Department of English as it was then known until 1969, has historically played a central role towards shaping the development of literature on the African continent.

You may recall the gathering in this great Hall in June 1962 for the **Conference of African Writing of English Expression**, which was the very first major international gathering of writers and critics of African literature on the African continent. It was held at a point when most African countries were about to gain political independence.

It especially provided a platform for defining the field of African literature, giving Makerere University a prominence in the evolution of African Literature in both its oral and written modes.

This 2015 Conference is perhaps the next major conference that Makerere University is hosting in the field of African Literary Scholarship. However, there have been others before it, including the 1974 Conference and other relatively smaller literary events to debate artistic and cultural issues that affect the Eastern African Region and Africa generally. The conference, therefore, will provide the much-needed platform for reflecting on earlier debates but also charting new ones.

It is such occasions that saw the rise of personalities such as Okot P' Bitek, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, David Rubadiri, Robert Sserumaga, Taban Lo Liyong, Timothy Wangusa, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, Benjamin Mkapa, and many others, who have left their marks on corridors of the Department of Literature of Makerere University. As an institution, we would be very proud to be the foundation of heirs to such celebrated scholars.

Our Guest of Honour and distinguished conference participants, I wish to end by thanking the Department of Literature, Makerere University, for taking on this impressive event that will go down in the books of history, following on others before it. On behalf of the entire University Management, we sincerely appreciate your efforts towards resource mobilisation to support the conference.

I wish, therefore, to take this opportunity to thank the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Uganda for the generous contribution towards publication of the proceedings of the conference in peer-reviewed journals. I also wish to appreciate the support from the Inter-University Council of East Africa towards facilitation of the conference. Indeed we are grateful for all the support we have received from different institutions and individuals towards this conference.

Last but not least, I thank Stellenbosch University and the University of Nairobi for partnering with us to make this conference a reality.

Mr. Guest of Honour, it is now my pleasure and privilege to invite you to deliver your remarks and open the conference officially.

We Build for the Future.

I thank you.