



**REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN,
TECHNICAL WORKING COMMITTEE
PROF EZRA MARITIM
ON THE OCCASION OF
THE GRANT OF CHARTER
TO
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY OF KENYA
ON
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2023
KONZA TECHNOPOILS**

- **HIS EXCELLENCY, THE PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA, HON. DR WILLIAM SAMOEI RUTO**
- **HON. EZEKIEL MACHOGU, CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION**
- **ALL PROTOCOLS OBSERVED.**

Your Excellency Sir, on behalf of the Technical Working Committee, I take this opportunity to thank you for championing the establishment of the Open University of Kenya. First, when you were the Minister for Higher Education, and now as the Head of State and government. The Open University of Kenya, whose Charter you issued today, is indeed your brainchild. Second, late last year, you gave instructions that you wanted to see the OUK chartered soonest. Today we are here to witness the realization of that expectation.

Your Excellency Sir, as we learn from the exploits of our world-renowned long-distance athletes, it does not matter how one poorly starts the race. What matters is how one finishes the race. Your Excellency, the race to operationalize the Open University of Kenya started fourteen years ago. Today it comes to the finish line. In your speech on Madaraka Day you said, and I quote, “...and later this year Kenyans will have the opportunity to go to University from the comfort of their homes”.

Your Excellency Sir, education for all is a worthwhile dream. Quality education makes human beings equal. Your own life, Mr. President, is a testimony to the equalizing power of education. The Open University of Kenya creates opportunities for those who cannot attend formal structured universities to get higher education. Setting up the Open University of Kenya is in part a response to a recent call from UNESCO on reimagining provision of higher education to benefit all who need it.

By providing an alternative pathway in access to higher education not only in-country but also across our territorial boundary, the OUK becomes a major vehicle for the integration of the East African Community. In your recent visit to Rwanda, you emphasized this point.

Your Excellency Sir, in line with the vision of the government you lead, the Open University of Kenya is a **framework for action** for repairing injustices that have prevailed and have been perpetuated by our education system since independence in 1963. We have practiced higher education systems that have suffered from the “grading disease”, failed to recognize prior learning, and is anchored and thrived on exclusion and hence closing off many from realizing themselves and their hidden potential. Sir, I would like to report to you that the Technical Working Committee on the operationalization of the Open University took time to deliberate on what

makes this University unique and in this context identified the following five aspects:

First, OUK is a Visionary Framework

Your Excellency Sir, a vision creates hope and without vision people perish. Sir, OUK is a framework of hope. It is a university that will build life and aspirations for Kenyans who for one reason or other had lost hope for higher education. By issuing a Charter to OUK today, you signify a move away from exclusion in access to higher education to inclusion.

Second, OUK is a Framework of Shared Prosperity

Your Excellency Sir, OUK is also a framework of shared prosperity. The Vision for OUK is “The innovative university for inclusive prosperity”. This declared Vision seeks to answer the question: “How do we enable Kenyans to benefit from the prosperity envisaged by Kenya Vision 2030?” Sir, the Technical Working

Committee believes that through inclusivity in education, national prosperity can be shared.

Third, OUK is An Enabling Framework

Your Excellency Sir, education is an enabling enterprise and by opening up continuous learning, opportunities for all are created. The Technical Working Committee which I had the privilege to chair recommends strongly that the concept of “school drop-out” should be withdrawn from use in our society whether casually or in official education documents. This is because we understand education to be a continuous process. In reality, what happens is that learners **step-out** of the learning process when they face challenges and **step-in** when conditions become favorable or affordable. OUK will therefore provide this revolving door of stepping-out and stepping-in.

Fourth, OUK is a Framework of Openness

Your Excellency Sir, the true democratization of education is through provision of open access to learning opportunities. One part of this University's name has the word "open". This implies that this University embraces flexibility and inclusivity with respect to admission, progression, time of study, place of study and methods of study. Those who want to combine work and study, travel and study, herd and study, pursue lifelong learning without restrictions or limitations with respect to age, gender or duration or cost of learning, now have a place to actualize their aspirations.

Fifth, OUK is A Strategic Framework

Your Excellency Sir, the Technical Working Committee sees the Open University as a strategic framework and hence its establishment will help the national and the African Union agenda by:

- Ensuring that the use of *education 4.0 interactive technologies* in teaching and learning in higher education becomes the principal mode rather than the peripheral mode.
- Ensuring that the masses of our people who need education are not left behind as advocated by SDG 4.
- Positioning Kenya as an exporter of education in Africa and thus enhancing AU Agenda 2063 and UNESCO's Convention on programmes, skills, students and staff mobility across the borders.
- Facilitation of those in diaspora and those in diplomatic service to access home grown programmes for their children.

Finally, **Your Excellency Sir**, I would like to assure you that the Technical Committee identified young ICT Kenyan graduates who developed world class LMS, website, e-library and digitized the courses.

[Request program developers and digitizers to stand up]

Your Excellency Sir, it is the wish of the Technical Committee that OUK develops its own custom designed ICT systems through open source approach. This approach will be one way of reducing tuition fees, containing operational cost and managing risks associated with students' personal data.

THANK YOU YOUR EXCELLENCY