

SPEECH BY Dr. KILEMI MWIRIA, ASSISTANT MINISTER, MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION AT THE PAN AFRICA CHEMISTRY NETWORK LAUNCH ON TUESDAY, 27TH MAY, 2008, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, CHIROMO CAMPUS, AT 10.00AM

HE Mr. Adam Wood, the British High Commissioner to Kenya

Dr Simon Campbell CBE, Past-President RSC

Dr David Lawrence, Head of Research, Syngenta

Professor Mohamed Hassan, President of NASAC and CEO of TWAS

“Promoting Science, Technology and Innovation in Africa”

Dr Richard Pike, CEO RSC

Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi, Deputy Vice Chancellor & Vice Chancellor’s representative

Prof. Lucy Irungu, Principal, College of Biological and Physical Sciences

Professor Shem Wandiga, Chairman Local Management Committee of the Hub

I am delighted to represent the Kenya Government at the Launch of the Pan Africa Chemistry Network. The network represents an innovative approach to working with universities, schools, scientists, teachers, and students in Africa. With a special focus on the Millennium Development Goals and the countries of Central Africa, the Network will ultimately span the entire Continent. Through a grant of Sterling Pounds 1 million Syngenta, an internationally known agricultural company has joined forces with the Royal Society of Chemistry of the United Kingdom to promote chemical sciences in the continent. This is a unique opportunity for a university like ours to join forces with a leading chemical society in Europe and a leading private sector using chemical sciences in order to build strong chemistry society in Africa.

On behalf of the Government, I wish to thank the Royal Society of Chemistry and Syngenta for this excellent support not only to our country but to the continent. I am informed that the Pan Africa Chemistry Network hub at the University of Nairobi will act as the centre for regional activities of the Royal Society of Chemistry in Africa for the benefit of not only Kenyan but also the United Kingdom chemical communities. The PACN prioritizes quality interaction and develops sustainable relationships with school scientists, universities and governments that build science and technology capacities all the time. The hub aspires to a high level of measurable activity, placing premium on leadership. Already the schools science competition launched this year will attract some of our best schools in developing the thinking capacities of our students in finding solutions to society problems. A second premium activity scheduled for this year is a review of Africa’s biodiversity in order to transform the African socio-economic development using this source.

I commend the leaders of the hub for the planned series of activities whose titles range from creation of research and collaboration facilities to increasing the numbers of scientist coming from the continent. In support of these activities I am happy to inform you that the Kenya Government has completed writing the 2030 National Vision, the draft Science and Technology Policy and the draft National Strategy for University

Education. The three documents will guide the government in implementing science, Technology and Innovation as one of the pillars of our national development. In readiness of the full implementation of the documents the government has already set aside KSh. 200 million for university research. Our science and technology policy puts emphasis on the same challenges the Network has identified. The government therefore appreciates this assistance given and will work very closely with the Hub in providing whatever needed assistance.

I am further informed that we have with us several eminent scientists from 12 African countries and two European countries represented here. I warmly welcome you to Kenya and hope that you will find time to visit our many attractions.

Ladies and Gentlemen, It now gives me great pleasure in officially declaring the Launch of the Pan Africa Chemistry Network. It is also my honour to introduce Dr. Simon Campbell CBE, Past-President RSC as our next speaker.