

**SPEECH BY DR. KENNETH S. OMBONGI, PRINCIPAL,
KENYA UTALII COLLEGE, DURING THE
INAUGURATION OF THE 2009 MANAGEMENT
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES ON 8TH JUNE 2009, AT
THE COLLEGE'S MADARAKA HALL.**

- Managers from various Tourism and Hospitality establishments,
- College colleagues, lecturers and resources persons,
- Other College staff present,
- Ladies and gentlemen.

Our distinguished guests, welcome to Kenya Utalii College – KUC. Welcome to this occasion that marks the beginning of this year's Management Development Programmes. The programme will last from now through to early July.

For some of you, I'm sure, being here is some kind of home coming. There is no need for me to tell you to feel at home. You were made here; your professionalism was sharpened here.

In a sense, therefore, you have come home to 'drink' from the very fountain of knowledge that you always cherish and relish. We are happy for you and I join my members of staff in both administration and academics to say to you, from the bottom of our hearts, welcome home; *karibu nyumbani*; if we were in Kisumu city we will say *machiegn dala*; in Kakamega we will say *yinjila hango*; and in Machakos we will say *wimuthokye musyi*.

We are, equally, happy for you because you have been our good ambassadors – spreading the tentacles of KUC far and wide; spreading the good and formidable name of Utalii College.

You truly lead while others follow; you lead while others can only imitate you; yes, you lead while others can only duplicate your best practices.

For those of you who have a non-KUC background let me tell you, in no uncertain terms, that now you are KUC by association.

I'm told many of you have been here before partaking of such courses as the ones that shall be offered.

Now, seat back, relax, listen and learn. Simply put, *jienjoy* the training and your time here. You are under highly experienced, tried and tested hands.

Out of these capable hands good things have come in the past; better things will come out of them this time round. Subsequently, whatever you do, wherever you will be, let the knowledge you will gain from here lead you and work for you.

With the KUC training, you will never get it wrong, you will go places and you will be cut for greater things in career progression.

Ladies and gentlemen, when your task here is ended, when you have acquired our credentials, go out there and tell the world that it is in this esteemed grounds that top notch managerial skills in tourism and hospitality are disseminated; that in Utalii we have never lost and we will never lose our formidable position as the home of hospitality training.

The Management Development Programmes glaringly manifest the unparalleled cohesiveness between us and the entire hotel and tourism industry. This unique tie between us is a bond no hammer is strong enough to break. The bond ensured that our courses and other related activities have remained relevant to the constantly changing demands of the job market.

Therefore, during your short stint among us, take a critical and wholesome look at us. Give us a candid report of what you think we need to improve in our relentless pursuit of excellence.

Indeed, your evaluation of us becomes the urgency of the moment in view of the media bashing the College was subjected to recently. As the people who know us best, project the right image of this place.

I'm sure many of you will not let your *alma mata* suffer unfair and purely subjective media publicity. Without you, KUC will not be; without KUC, I bet, you will not be.

Get it from me here, today and now that we are not about to close shop as it has been depicted; I want to let you know that we are as strong as ever; we are intact; we are up and running; and we are up to task we have been mandated to do. We have done in the past and we will continue doing it in the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in saying so does not mean we are oblivious of the challenges that we face, just like any other public institution. Challenges of the aging college hardware, particularly infrastructure, and human resource handicaps.

These, and many others, are pertinent problems that must be dealt with as a matter of urgency. Only then we will proactively respond to the demands of modern hospitality and tourism training.

I want you to know that these problems, these challenges, these hindrances, are not beyond our ability to deal with. I believe that the only way of reaching the furthest limits of the possible is by keeping on trying. Defeat is only for those who stop trying. We will try; we will keep going. Little by little we will surmount the challenges before us.

All we need is your support. As our single most important segment of stakeholders, we keep you abreast at every step we make and any obstacle we meet.

Finally, it is my hope that you will reap maximum benefits from your interaction with your colleagues and resources persons in this year's programmes. "The need to learn never ends; only the desire to learn ends", so the saying goes. When I look at you, I'm unequivocally convinced that your desire to learn is really burning; that is indeed why you are here. Keep it burning; let it burn!

Ladies and gentlemen, it is, now, my honor and great pleasure to declare the 2009 Management Development Programmes officially open.

Thank you and May God bless you all.