

**REMARKS BY DR. KENNETH S. OMBONGI,
PRINCIPAL, KENYA UTALII COLLEGE, DURING THE
OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE COLLEGE BY THE MINISTER
FOR TOURISM, HON. NAJIB BALALA, EGH, MP, ON
THURSDAY JULY 23, 2009.**

- Minister for Tourism, Hon. Najib Balala
- Permanent Secretary, Madam Eunice Miima
- Senior Officers from the Ministry
- Chairman College Board of Governors, Mr. Basil Tangai Ngoma
- Members of the Board
- College Staff and Students.

Hon. Minister, on behalf of staff and students, welcome to Kenya Utalii College. Before I undertake my humble duty of inviting Chairman Ngoma to address us, if you allow me Sir, let me say a couple of things.

73 days ago, in the words of one journalist, you plucked me out of the lecture halls of the University of Nairobi, where I was teaching, reading and writing history.

Since then, I have walked in and around this compound; I have had time to talk to many of the staff and students before you Sir.

I have had interesting conversations with some on phone; I have received many emails and phone text messages from them.

In all these interactions Sir, a number of things have become glaringly and eloquently clear to me.

First, that Utalii is a historic institution; an important institution that has played a leading role in this country in the 34 years of its existence.

And therefore it is a great privilege, it is a great honor, for you to have given me the opportunity to come forth at the threshold of the second decade of the 21st century to be part of this great College. For that accept my sincere thanks and gratitude.

The second thing that has come out of my more than two month's stay here is that many are the students and the workers of this institution who have been looking forward to this day. The day they want to listen to your advice, your thoughts and vision for us; the day they want you to see, for yourself without being told, the work they do and get to know what they deserve for it; indeed, the day they want to know that you are on their side and with your support they can face the future with confidence.

And therefore, *Waziri*, I wish to assure you that our people here are overjoyed to welcome you; they are so pleased to have you here; they are inspired by your spirit of getting things done and indeed your dedication to public service.

Hon. Minister the third thing that has come out clearly for the time I have been around is that there is good news in the College. The good news is: we have many of our people here who are optimists, workers, men and women, who believe that it can be done; men and women who just move on and keep trying. These are the workers who have made this institution great and continue to work to maintain the pillars of excellence that have made Utalii to be known over the years.

Waziri, these are the people who have worked so hard for so long for so little in way of salary and wages. And therefore the question they have asked me to ask you Sir is: when will they be appropriately appreciated, by way of competitive remuneration, for the great work they have done, they are doing and they will do for this institution?

The other good news in the College Hon. Minister is that we have more than 700 Students who are an embodiment of the hopes and dreams of hundreds of young people in this country.

These young men and these young women have embraced imaginative, realistic and mature ways of dealing with the challenges they face as students; we are proud of them; they better their best in all they do; in class, they better their best; in extra curricula activities, they better their best; while undertaking their internship, they better their best. Consequently, we support them to our level best so that together we will take Utalii College up, up and up.

In a sense, Hon. Minister, the good behavior of our student community contributes to our confidence as staff as we go about our day-to-day business in this College. This confidence on our side as lecturers, as workers, clearly informs the fact that Utalii College still holds the promise of remaining a great academic institution in hospitality and tourism training; that is the promise we want to build on; it is the promise that has spurred us to embark on new ways, new breakthroughs, in the understanding of the challenges we face as an institution.

Finally, Hon. Minister, as a historian, I know that the best way to relate to the past is to draw inspiration from it. As a College we have had a great past and a great heritage.

With more than 40,000 personnel trained in three decades of our existence, with many general managers in hotel establishments in and out of Kenya belonging to our alumnae, we can shout and say we have done it in the past and we are doing it now!

Mr. Minister, I, also, know that the best way to predict the future is to invent it now. We are happy today that you have come here to invent the future of Utalii College with us; to share your ideas on how we will tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow to face the future steadily and squarely. And when the history of Utalii College will be written in the future you will receive your credit and acknowledgement.

And now, Hon. Minister, it is my singular honor, privilege and, indeed, great pleasure to invite Chairman Ngoma to address the meeting and subsequently invite our Permanent Secretary.

Thank you.