

**WELCOME SPEECH BY DR. KENNETH OMBONGI, PRINCIPAL
KENYA UTALII COLLEGE, DURING THE INTRODUCTION AND
COURSE OPENING FOR NEW STUDENTS HELD ON FRIDAY,
30TH OCTOBER 2009, AT THE MADARAKA HALL.**

- Divisional heads,
- Heads of department,
- Lecturers,
- College workers,
- Chairman KUCSA,
- Members of the students' council and the entire student body
- Ladies and gentlemen,

How are you? Niatia? Uvoo wenu? Namaste? Mbuya mure?

It gives me great pleasure, indeed singular honor, to join with you today in warmly welcoming the 499 new students who have joined us.

For some of you, the incoming students, I know reporting to Utalii College has been long in coming. You did interviews; you waited for results with bated breath. Others, I know, have tried these interviews more than once. But when all is said and done you are here ultimately.

Congratulations. Behold, I want to let you know that this is no mean achievement. This is an extraordinary achievement. Many are the young men who have worked, and worked harder, in an effort to get admission here to no avail; indeed, many are the young women who have tried to make it here in vain.

Consequently, this is an opportunity you have got which must be relished and cherished by all means, at all costs and at all lengths. Oh, what an opportunity for you young people! What a great time for you!

Make the best use of it; put your best foot forward in order to reap maximum benefit from this enduring spring of knowledge, Utalii College. Set your eyes on the ultimate prize – academic excellence; let's stay focused on the target.

So, for the men roll up your sleeves, for the ladies move up your skirts, and get working and working harder. You have no option but to work diligently because for you to come out of this place with flying colours your academic work must be done and done well. Your practicals have to be undertaken as required.

Ladies and gentlemen:

In my young age I have travelled widely, met people, seen many and lived in diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. The greatest lesson I have learned in all these is that hard work rewards; it rewards richly. And I know, for sure, that with hard work, and little else, you can conquer any challenge you face as a student.

In a sense, my fellow young people, you have come here, full of life, a great source of pride for your parents, guardians and your countries. You are, indeed, an embodiment of Africa's dreams, Africa's future, Africa's prosperity.

Don't disappoint this continent; don't disappoint this College; don't disappoint those who have gone ahead of you in the industry, from here, work hard to create the name for this College.

Mine, at this moment in time, is a pledge to you; a pledge to do everything possible within my powers to create a conducive environment for your training, superb training indeed.

I know we have challenges, particularly the lack of changing rooms for self-sponsored students. We have challenges with our transport for educational trips; we have challenges with certain amenities in our hostels and classrooms; in our dining and a couple of other areas.

Let me let you know that we are squarely focused in dealing with these challenges. Changing rooms for self-sponsored are in the offing since plans have been set. They will come up soon. It is part of our performance target this year to provide this vital facility to you people.

We have put together a programme of comprehensive preventive maintenance to update our facilities. Our Chief Maintenance Officer, Mr. Omondi, where are you?, *Jaduong*, circulate quickly an implementation matrix to tell these people when and how we plan to keep our facilities, amenities, up to date.

In other words, I'm talking about three things that make people in a community, such as ours, to live harmoniously, to live happily. I'm talking about communication; communication; communication.

Dean of Students, communicate upcoming activities and welfare programmes to these people; Hostel warden, regularly communicate the does and don'ts with regard to the use of our hostels. Every body, let us keep communication channels open, let us keep the communication going please!

Beloved colleagues, lecturers and workers of the College, let us take note that Utalii is changing, and changing very fast; try not to be on the wrong side of history. One way of being on the right side of history my people is to embrace communication as an important paradigm shift from the ancient days, the yester years, when only few individuals used to be privy to the on-goings in the corridors of power in the College. We have opened up; it is now a people's College; our people are entitled to information; please give it to them!

Yes, we have had our own difficulties in the past; no doubt, we will have difficulties in the future; but here we agree on one thing: no matter the difficulties, no matter the challenges, KUC, Kenya Utalii College, is a great institution, for that is what it was meant to be. In one accord, in unison, moving forward together as one, we work and are working to make it remain great. I therefore invite our new students to be of this great work; be part of this great heritage; to be part of this great institution. *Karibu sana!*

There is one thing I will not forget to tell our new students. You are gathered from all corners of this country; from every village and hamlet. However, it matters less where your geographic origins are. From Mt. Kenya to Lake Victoria, from Lokichogio to Namanga , from Busia to Lamu, Kigali to Dar es Salaam, we have all come here with one aim, one objective, - to learn and prepare to serve one of the fastest growing industries; the industry of hospitality and tourism.

Any thing that will divert us from that noble goal, from that focus, is an enemy to you; it is an enemy to be avoided like you would do to a plague.

For example, in my long experience, as a student, I know that it is rare that pre-marital sex and education head in the same direction.

Sex is a wonderful thing; the most pleasurable activity that God ever created. But if misused it can, also, bring so much pain, so much destruction, particularly where proper and mature decision making lack. As a student you are better of abstaining; you won't die; there is no known disease which is a product of either no sex or insufficient sex; never! You won't have any worry, you won't regret it if you abstain. You will do your academic assignments very easily and you will pass highly.

For the young men, please abstain; please. If you won't and want to enjoy something that God meant for married adults, then the direction of our ATMs, here in College, should be clearly known to you.

Some of you, men, do not like the idea of using a condom due to a terribly warped belief that rubberless sex is more pleasurable. Rather than be sorry later, rather than being such a daredevil character that you risk your life, why not use a condom to avoid parenthood and HIV/AIDs to a small degree. I will say that again, to a small degree!

For the young women, be aware; be aware of those boys, those men, your mother warned you about – those ruffians, unkempt rascals of no value to the world other than always looking for an opportunity to entice you to jump into bed with them.

Don't be like what David Mailu, in his book *One by one*, once called 'an open wound from which you cannot prevent flies from falling.' My sisters, give your cookies, if you have to, willingly, consensually, but knowing that you are responsible for any outcome – either HIV/AIDS infection or pregnancy.

So my sisters, in the words of Milly G, in 'Woman's Instinct magazine in The Standard recently, I will advise you that "do not go settling for the first guy who tugs at your skirt and gives you a little attention. Wait; wait until you find your king, the man to whom you will gladly give up the controls because he is strong, decisive and can handle you"; who can protect you from unplanned parenthood; who can protect you from HIV/AIDS.

However, if you have failed the test of chastity, the test of remaining a virgin until you get your king, don't worry there is only one more chance for you. I believe in the words of Henry Ford, the celebrated American billionaire, that "Failure is only the opportunity to begin again, only this time more wisely." Begin again; be away from these men.

To all our students, including the continuing ones, you know that we have come here from diverse backgrounds; we have come from diverse stations in life; indeed, we have come here from different corners of this country, this continent; this world.

In the same way, face diverse challenges. But for those of you who call the name of God, the Almighty, Paramatma, Om,, Allah, Ngai, Mulungu, Nyasaye, whatever you call Him, I will let you know that no matter where you are, what trials you face, what enemies you meet, there – hovering around you – will be the presence, the grace and the glory of God to protect you.

I know for sure, if you ever needed the Lord before, you surely do need Him now; you need Him in the morning; you need him in the noon time; you need Him in the night; you need Him every hour as the old Negro spiritual goes.

Let it be known to you that the shortest distance between a problem and a solution is the distance between your knees and the floor. The eternal truth which still holds, which still rings true today as it used to be in the time of old is that the one who kneels to the Lord, can stand up to anything!

As I move to my conclusion now, there is something I would remind those of you who have joined this esteemed institution. This is that the people, young and old, men and women, you see here, the workers, the lecturers, are the strength of this college.

Not once in my conversations with them since I came here, have I met with, have I talked to people without hope. They work hard; they are underpaid and, some times harassed. But they have never given up! They have never given up! If for nothing else, please respect them. Give them what is due to them – respect. We owe it all to them.

And finally, for our lecturers, we take great pride in the many achievements and the stable reputation you have built over the years as indomitable teachers in hospitality. You have done well!

These achievements have not come easy; nor has it been the work of a single individual. This is the result of the concerted hard work with a collective determination to succeed and to remain at the top. I salute you all and say to you my friends let the struggle to succeed continue – *Aluta continua!!*

We have a lot ahead of us as we prepare to start the degree programmes and spread our wings beyond Thika Road here in Nairobi.

I am confident that the times ahead are bright. We have made it in the past, we are making it today and we shall make it, even bigger, in the future.

With those remarks, ladies and gentlemen, it is now my great pleasure, a great honour, to declare the new students members of the great Kenya Utalii College family.

Thank you; thank you very much!