

**SPEECH BY DR. KENNETH S. OMBONGI, PRINCIPAL  
KENYA UTALII COLLEGE, AT THE CLOSE OF THE 15<sup>TH</sup>  
EDITION OF THE NATIONAL TOURISM COMPETITIONS  
HELD ON THURSDAY 27<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2010 AT KENYA UTALII  
COLLEGE**

- Our Chief Guest, Chief Executive Officer, Commission for Higher Education, Prof. Everett Standa,
- Chairman Tourism Industry-Kenya Utalii College Liaison Committee, Mr. Timothy Kagambi,
- Chairman, Kenya Utalii College Board of Governors, Mr. Boniface Mganga
- Industry stakeholders present,
- Adjudicators,
- Participants in this competitions,
- Distinguished guests,

- Ladies and gentlemen:

I'm happy to welcome you all to this occasion that marks the end of the 2010 Annual National Tourism competitions.

Our Chief Guest, Sir, I cannot begin to imagine the sacrifices you have made to be here with us, considering your heavy work schedule.

When I spoke to you last week you told me how busy you were and I was extremely, extremely, humbled when you readily

accepted my invitation to grace this important occasion in the Annual Calendar of the Tourism Industry.

Sir, my words, and just mere words, are not enough but allow me nevertheless to say, thank you; thank you very much for this kind gesture of goodwill from you and from the Commission for Higher Education.

Our Chief Guest Sir:

This occasion is a culmination of the efforts of many; many people; many establishments; many supporters; many collaborators and industry stakeholders.

To all of you who have worked so hard for so long, and hand in hand with us, to ensure the sterling success of these competitions, we say, welcome and thank you very much.

To this year's competitors, the great men and the great women from the industry from various regions, it is thumbs up from all of us. Behold, you are all winners; you have reaffirmed your status as the top cream of the industry. If I knew a little of French, I will say you are the *crème de crème* of the Kenyan tourism sector; you are the ones who constitute the magical Kenya that we hear about in the international hospitality arena.

I, therefore, urge you, great men and women, to go out there with pride and triumph, and make a statement, and a big, loud and clear statement indeed, to both our visitors and competitors, make a statement to all and sundry, that Kenya is the world's home of hospitality.

For me, ladies and gentlemen, that is the essence of these competitions; that is the sole objective of getting together, every year, to show case our culinary and service skills; to foster excellence in our industry with a view to making Kenya the best and preferred tourist destination.

In Utalii we are proud, and profoundly so, to be closely associated with these competitions. I know, for sure, that many of you are not new to Utalii; many of you are our graduates who have drunk from this great fountain of knowledge; many of you are our collaborators and partners, who need no introduction to any corners of this college.

I hope you have had a good time here, as always; you have renewed, once more, your connection with Utalii; you have enjoyed the warmth and hospitality of the Utalii College community.

We, equally, hope that the social networks you have managed to forge out of these competitions will continue to strengthen the solid bond, that firm foundation, that we have created in our quest to grow the industry.

Our Chief Guest, Sir:

The National Tourism Competitions are an annual activity; they bring together the tourism industry employees to display their very best of skills and experiences in various categories.

The competitors are drawn from all regions of the country in which preliminary competitions take place, culminating in the finals here at the College.

Those before us today, Sir, are the regional champions who have for the last one week battled it out with one another for the coveted final positions in various categories.

This year, a total of 326 employees participated in the finals of the competitions. This is a significant increase compared with the last competitions when the College hosted 238 industry employees.

Reports from this year's adjudicators indicate that there is a remarkable improvement in standards across all categories.

We feel, as a College, greatly encouraged by these positive indicators; it gives us reason, and reason enough, to continue working with the industry to organise these events.

The College is committed to this goal; the College is steadfast, in partnership with the industry, to achieve this goal every year.

Our Chief Guest, Sir, I have no doubt, whatsoever, that you, as a scholar of no mean ability and achievement, have traveled far and wide in this world.

I have no doubt in my mind, either, that you will agree with me that Kenyan hospitality surpasses many that we know of in the rest of the world.

That hospitality, that talent, that skill, is made and nurtured here on these grounds, Utalii College, on which we are today.

For over 35 years this College has produced personnel for the hospitality and tourism industry not only for this country but for the rest of Africa and the world at large.

It is for this reason that when we knocked at your doors with the request to be allowed to start offering degrees, we did this with full confidence, and knowledge, that we were ripe and ready for the higher status.

I would like to thank you Professor most sincerely, from the depths of my heart, for your special consideration to give us permission, within a record time, to offer degree programmes in collaboration with the University of Nairobi starting this year.

However, allow me Sir, to make another passionate appeal on behalf of the College and on behalf of our graduates in particular.

Our graduates, our aluminae, some of them seated here today, are saying that they want their degrees to come from their *Alma mata*, Kenya Utalii College; they are saying this is what they have been waiting for; and waiting they have done; they have waited for long indeed; but they say they can wait just a little longer.

The answer I have given them every time they ask me about how long they have to wait is just one. Not very long! Not very

long, because Prof. Standa is a friend of Utalii; not very long, because Professor has allowed us to make the first step towards our desired direction; indeed not very long because Professor agreed to be here with us today and hear it from us that we are ready to move to university status.

Ladies and gentlemen:

As I move to my conclusion now, I'm not unmindful of individuals who sacrificed all, particularly here in our College, to make this occasion as colorful, as successful, as we see it.

Many are our lecturers who haven't slept, literally, since Sunday while organizing these competitions. Many are our administrators who have put in their very best to get things done and to get us to where we are now. My people I'm very proud of you. I want to say it here and now, before everybody from the industry and the Chairman of our Board, that you are second to none when it comes to event organizing.

Mr. John Wandaka, our Deputy Director, Alumnae and Placement, you have done well as the in-charge of this program. From John Chege, Masika wa Masika, Wilson Mwangi, Zippy Ngure, Jenniffer Maina, Jane Towett, Josephine Katumo,

Ann Wamathai, Omutimu, Richard Lelemusi, Julius Sang, Henry Kiago and Michael Osir Oteng' we salute you all for your exemplary performance in organizing this event on behalf of the College.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Let me, at this juncture, welcome Mr. Timothy Kagambi, Chairman Tourism Industry-Kenya Utalii College Liaison Committee to make his remarks and thereafter invite our Chief Guest to address us and give awards to the winners of this year's competition.

Thank you and May God, the Almighty, bless you all abundantly.