

**REMARKS BY DR. KENNETH S. OMBONGI, PRINCIPAL,
KENYA UTALII COLLEGE, DURING THE CLOSING
CEREMONY FOR THE PUBS, ENTERTAINMENT AND
RESTAURANTS ASSOCIATION OF KENYA (PERAK) IN-
SERVICE COURSES HELD ON WEDNESDAY,
16TH SEPTEMBER 2009.**

- Our Chief Guest, Mr. Kipkorir Lagat, Director of Tourism,
- Chief Executive Officer, Catering and Tourism Development Levy Trustees, Mr. Allan Chenane,
- Vice Chairman PERAK, CEO PERAK and other officials here today,
- CEO KAHC, Mr. Mike Macharia,
- Senior Managers from the Tourism Industry,
- Senior Staff of the Catering Tourism and Development Levy Trustees,
- Lecturers and other staff of Kenya Utalii College,
- Course Participants,
- Invited Guests,
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Our chief guest, let me, from the outset, express our sincere and heartfelt thanks; thanks for honouring our invitation to grace this occasion. Your presence, Sir, really says that Government is here. And where there is Government, I can say for sure nothing goes wrong.

Also, I want to welcome all our supporters, collaborators who are here with us this morning and all those who have worked so hard for so long to produce so much in training these participants, I say bravo! You worked hard, you have put in your very best; indeed you have demonstrated that good and concerted efforts give birth to good and abundant results.

Our chief guest, this occasion marks yet another milestone in the tripartite engagement which brings together Utalii College, CTDLT as well as the hospitality and tourism industry. It makes it eloquently and glaringly clear that our aspirations, our dreams, indeed, our goals, converge.

This convergence is manifested in our shared need to give service, good service, 21st century service, to our customers, customers who patronize pubs, entertainment joints and restaurants in and around Nairobi.

For Utalii College, conducting this training is, in a way, feeding the golden goose which lays the golden eggs on which we feed on. For CTDLT, funding this training is putting manure into where you harvest from. For the PERAK trainees, this training is meant to sharpen your skills, your tools of trade.

Ladies and gentlemen:

In a sense, I am saying we are all in this thing together; we can't do without each other. Ours is a partnership, a bond, which no hammer is strong enough to break.

Ladies and gentlemen:

This programme is a special one. It is conceptualized and tailor-made to be PERAK-specific because of their unique needs. It is a deliberate departure from the usual practice. We have realized it is no longer tenable to lump all hospitality employees together without due regard to differences in their establishments, their customer profiles, their demands.

Consequently, our decision to conduct these courses was informed by a clear understanding on our part, this is the understanding that we need to cater for the diverse nature of the hospitality and tourism industry.

It is increasingly obvious that we can no longer talk about the sector without thinking about the fast food restaurants; we can no longer talk about the sector without thinking about the entertainment spots, not only that – we can no longer talk about the sector without thinking about discotheques and pubs which colour our night life.

Therefore, Mr. chief guest, there is need to shift our view of the industry to recognise that there is segment of the sector that is represented by PERAK. This segment is steadily becoming a big player in the industry, it is a major revenue contributor when the industry's earnings are consolidated.

Consequently Sir, it is our duty, our noble obligation, as a training centre to equip workers, in the outlets represented by PERAK with the necessary skills, good knowledge and the right attitude to enable them to give satisfactory, up to date and international-standard services.

We reaffirm the college's commitment to continue meeting PERAK's training needs. We have embarked on a continuous process in reviewing our training programmes, particularly the in-service courses, which have so far played a significant role in staff capacity enhancement in such important segments of the industry.

For example, I note with satisfaction that last week we held a successful meeting with industry stakeholders in Western province, in Kakamega, to evaluate the courses and come up with the best, most inclusive and more sophisticated way of handling them.

Soon, and very soon indeed, we intend to move to the rest of the regions, Coast, Eldoret, Mara, Mt. Kenya, Nyanza. Our intention is to ensure that these courses not only reflect PERAK-specific needs but also region-specific demands.

Our guest of honour, there is no doubt whatsoever, that as a College we made significant strides in fulfilling our mandate. We have made it in the past, we are doing it now and we will definitely do it in the future.

But we, also, remain alive to the reality that there is always room for continuous improvement; room for embracing change; room for keeping ourselves relevant. This is because we are dealing with a fast changing industry in a fast changing world.

As the home of hospitality and tourism training, we will strive to keep apace with the demands of our customers, the industry, to ensure that our services to them remain relevant. For example, we have taken definite steps to address the growing number of those seeking training opportunities in the hospitality and tourism sector. Later this year, we shall be launching our first satellite college in Mombasa, the first in a series of such projects earmarked for the major towns such as Kisumu, Nakuru and Nyeri.

At the same time, we have now, extended the self-sponsored training programmes to include more courses and students than ever before.

Ladies and gentlemen:

In today's occasion, I am glad to note more than 202 employees of various establishments are set to get certificates after attending the short courses. These included Frontline Customer Service Provision as well as Food and Personal Hygiene Awareness.

The training, which we are closing today, is the second one of its kind. The first was organized and mounted in Mombasa during the month of May this year where 149 employees were trained. Thus, so far the College has trained a total of 351 employees under the auspices of PERAK.

For the graduands, I congratulate you for this achievement. You have drunk, so to speak, from the same fountain of knowledge, Utalii College, where great men and great women in the industry have drunk from. With a training from Utalii, you belong to a different league now. You have acquired credentials that have automatically put you at both the international and national league in hospitality services.

I, therefore, beseech you, graduands, to go out there and show the world that you have been put in the scales of the leading hospitality school and found worthy. Practice the skills and knowledge you have acquired. Let the world know that the service you give is to the best of standards as practiced everywhere.

Thus, wherever you will be, whatever you will be doing and whoever you will be interacting with better your best in your service. In your pubs better your best; in your restaurants better your best; in your entertainment joints better your best.

And when we do that we will show that we have gone through Utalii. We will have our customers in large numbers satisfied and coming back again and again. Our employers will make their money, you will get your salaries and together all of us will be happy and joyous.

And now, distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my pleasure, indeed a great and singular honour, to invite, Our Chief Guest to address us.