

REPUBLIC OF RWANDA



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER

**Remarks by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister
Dr. Edouard Ngirente**

**At the official opening of the tenth Annual
Meeting of Inter-University Council for East
Africa (IUCEA)**

Park Inn Hotel, Kigali June 20th, 2019

- **Honorable Ministers, here present;**
- **Hon. Deputy Secretary General of the East African Community;**
- **Hon. Permanent and Principal Secretaries here present;**
- **Chairperson of the Inter-University Council for East Africa;**
- **Executive Director of the East African Business Council;**
- **Executive Secretary of Inter-University Council for East Africa;**
- **Heads of Commissions and Councils for Higher Education;**
- **Representatives of partners present;**
- **Vice Chancellors;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Good morning,

- 1.** Let me start by thanking the Inter-University Council for East Africa for organizing this 10th Annual Meeting in Rwanda. On behalf of the people of Rwanda, I wish to warmly welcome you all to our country. I wish to extend a special welcome to our guests who have travelled from East Africa and beyond to come and share experiences with us on this important regional agenda.

- 2.** This Inter-University Council for East Africa annual meeting is significant as it brings together key drivers of our higher education fraternity to share the milestones achieved and strategies required to improve the quality of our Higher education system. This meeting is a platform for local and international experts to dialogue on how the quality of standards and competitiveness of higher education should be

enhanced and maintained to respond to the needs of the community as regards social and economic development.

3. As we mark 10 years since Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) was recognized as an East African institution and mainstreamed, our region needs to redesign and streamline delivery of higher education to meet the high and ever growing expectations of our society. The theme of this Annual Meeting carries an underlying message that our region needs to transform Higher education and adapt to a new era of technological advancement.

4. I am happy that the theme of this year's annual forum is linked to the Global 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR). This revolution is being driven among others by emerging technology breakthroughs in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and the Internet of Things.

- 5.** This trend represents a high growth and rapid change. This rapidity of advance in technologies requires a proactive response from the higher educational sector. This places the need to streamline the quality of education for human resource development and curriculum review.

- 6.** It is therefore imperative to adapt and scale up new forms of education to match the rapid speed of scientific and technological advances, if we are to assure the sustainability of our economies and the relevance of higher education as a responsive and vital component of the society. I have no doubt that higher education in the region is already undergoing digital journey of one form or another.

Distinguished guests,

- 7.** For our universities to deliver to the optimum quality of digital and ICT expectations, allow me to elaborate on some of prerequisites that need to be considered. Institutions must implement academic programs that allow them to develop students who can think and reinvent themselves within the changing world they will graduate into.

- 8.** For our children to enter higher learning education with developed analytical thinking, we need to resolve the issue of numeracy we are facing as Africans in general. In fact, as I mentioned last month during the 5th Regional Forum for the Partnership for Skills in Applied Sciences, Engineering and Technology (PASET), we need to consider mathematics as an important tool that will help our students to develop and achieve this analytical thinking. In doing so, there is a need to ensure that our

pupils who complete their primary schools are well equipped with relevant basic numeracy skills while those who complete their secondary schools have a minimum proficiency in Mathematics regardless their ambitions to prepare them for any field of study in Higher learning.

9. I understand that today we are launching the East African Centre for Mathematical Research. This centre may serve as a platform that can be used to link secondary and higher education whereby lecturers can use it to inspire and mentor students at their young stage to love mathematics. This will enable our students to grow into adults who are confident, capable, problem-solvers, and who can make the right conclusions and decisions in whatever field of work and at all levels.

10. Within the framework of ensuring the credibility of our universities, Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) should elaborate clear accreditation requirements that public and private universities must fulfil before they start to operate. No university should be accredited on the basis of fulfilling merely the minimum requirements as it can undermine the quality of our education system.

11. To make it clear, allowing universities to enrol students without having fulfilled the required standards compromises the quality and relevance of the required skills given to higher learning graduates. For this reason, we believe that our accreditation system will help us to address issues of non-fulfilment of requirements. I would like also call upon our private sector to invest in higher education upon the fulfilment of the requirements. The Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA)

should provide a clear checklist of the requirements for a higher education institution to start its operational activities.

12. Likewise, I would like to recommend that our universities to keep on upholding the teaching quality and strive to meet international education standards. At the same time, we also need to keep lecturers up to date. In this regard, an emphasis on continued in-service training especially doctoral studies needs to be strengthened.

13. It is also important for the educational institutions to redesign appropriate and effective pedagogical methods to best combine and strike a good balance between teaching activities and research.

Distinguished guests,

14. While we acknowledge that some steps have been taken towards embracing ICT in higher education, there is an urgent need for a paradigm shift towards greater acceptance of ICT in all spheres of higher education such as in teaching, learning, research, administration and so on. In the digital transformation of higher education, University leaders should play a more critical role due to the magnitude of change, the degree of disruption and the power of inertia that the transformation requires. This is because such transformation requires institutional policy reforms and provision of the necessary human and financial resources.

15. For that reason, today's educational leaders need to be able to select among many digital initiatives, manage accelerating innovation cycles, and reshape their institutions and organizations around new approaches.

16. Looking at the profile of the participants in this meeting, I have no doubt that you will strategize for adoption of new strategies and innovation models that will catalyze the transformation of our education systems and hence our economies. In our deliberations, let us borrow a leaf from other global experiences whereby the digitization and digitalization of higher education and adoption of new technologies are on higher levels in advancement of higher education.

17. Let me take this opportunity to applaud again the Inter-University Council for East Africa for facilitating the establishment of the East African Centre for Mathematical Research, whose objective is to promote and coordinate research and Postgraduate Training in Pure and Applied Mathematics in the East African Region. It is my hope that the centre will stimulate and strengthen cooperation between researchers in

the East African region in specific areas of mathematics and researchers in other disciplines.

18. I also wish to congratulate all Inter-University Council for East Africa Secretariat, and stakeholders for marking 10 years of Inter-University Council for East Africa as an EAC institution. This great milestone will continue to help the region's higher education system to reposition itself and embrace ICT and digitization which I have no doubt will benefit our on-going socio-economic transformations.

19. Before I conclude my remarks, let me once again thank the Inter-University Council for East Africa, for successfully organizing this 10th Annual meeting. You are our key partners in driving and shaping the quality of our education system. We very much recognise your

paramount role in this transformational journey towards harmonization of our higher education system.

20. I wish you all fruitful deliberations and interactions during the meeting, and a most comfortable and memorable stay in Kigali.

21. It is now my pleasure to declare this 10th Annual Meeting of the Inter-University Council for East Africa officially open.

I THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR YOUR KIND ATTENTION!