

CITATION ON

PROFESSOR JOHN ONYANGO KOKWARO
B.Sc. (Addis Ababa), M.Sc., Ph.D. (Uppsala)
(Professor of Botany)

ON HIS CONFERMENT OF

THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF SCIENCE (D.Sc.)

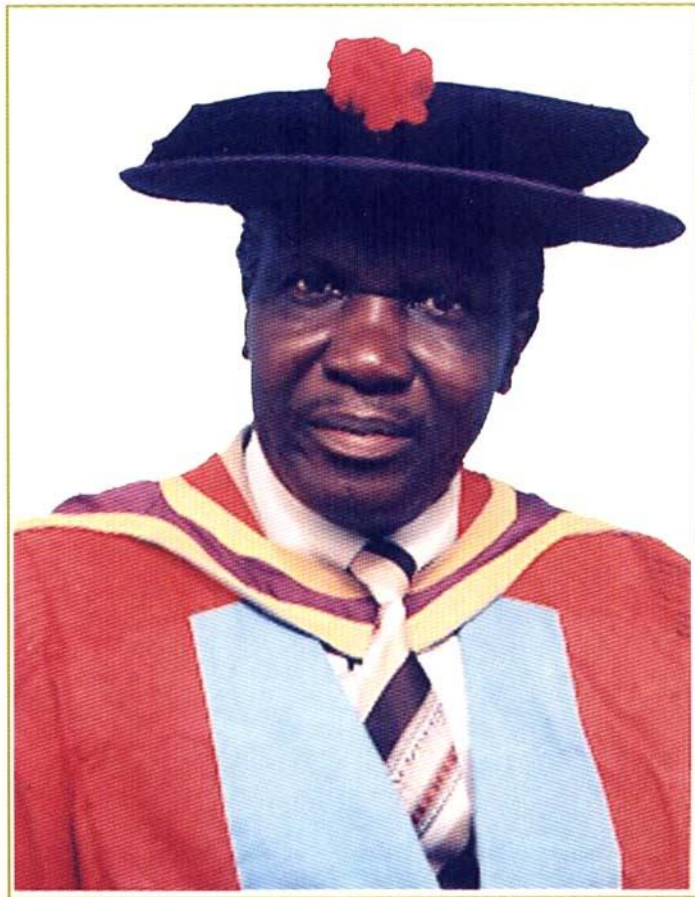
OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

AT NAIROBI, KENYA

ON

17TH OCTOBER, 2008



PROFESSOR JOHN ONYANGO KOKWARO
B.Sc. (Addis Ababa), M.Sc., Ph.D. (Uppsala)
(Professor of Botany)

Prof. Kokwaro was born in Gem Location, Nyanza Province, Kenya from where he received both his Primary School (St. Stephen ACK Cathedral, Kisumu) and Intermediate School education. His late father James Okwaro was one of the pioneers of education at the CMS Maseno School where he later became the first Kenyan School Bursar under the late educationist Mr. Carey Francis.

The young Kokwaro joined Bugema Missionary College (currently Bugema University) in Uganda in 1957. He sat his Cambridge School Certificate Examination in 1960 and passed with Distinction. He was an obedient and bright form IV class prefect.

On his return to Kenya in 1961, he got a job with the District Education Board of Kisumu, Ministry of Education. In the course of the year, he was awarded two scholarships: a partial scholarship to the University of British Columbia, Vancouver Canada, and a full scholarship to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Since he had to pay for an air ticket at E.A.Shs.700.00., and his monthly salary was only E.A.Shs.375.00, he opted for the Addis Ababa scholarship in order to study for the Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture. After completing his third year in 1964, the Ethiopian Government introduced a compulsory one year military training for all their students. Kokwaro returned home and joined the East African Herbarium under the East African Community in Nairobi as a Research Botanist Trainee. That was the beginning of Kokwaro's research interest in the Flora of East Africa, having his first botanical expedition to Mt Kenya in 1964. Kokwaro returned to

Ethiopia the following year and graduated with a B.Sc. degree in Agriculture in June 1966. He returned to Nairobi and joined the East African Herbarium this time as a full Research Botanist.

Being the first Kenyan graduate to join this area of research under the East African Community, arrangements were quickly made for his postgraduate training. Kokwaro was in 1966 awarded a full postgraduate scholarship by SIDA to study Systematic Botany at the prestigious Uppsala University in Sweden. His professor at Uppsala was the late Prof. Olov Hedberg, an expert on Afro-alpine flora. Both his M.Sc. and Ph.D. theses at the University were based on East African Flora. He later published as part of his findings the Flora of Tropical East Africa by Kew Herbarium in U.K. His Ph.D. thesis on Geraniaceae of Tropical Eastern Africa presented in 1969 was awarded with the highest honours.

A dedicated University Professor and scholar, Prof. Kokwaro is the first Kenyan to present, defend and be awarded a Doctor of Science degree of the University of Nairobi. The title of his thesis is "Systematics and Ethnobotany of Selected Taxa and Ecosystems of East Africa".

Prof. Kokwaro has an outstanding University teaching career dating back to August 1968 when he first joined the Department of Botany at the then University College Nairobi, University of East Africa. He became the first Kenyan university lecturer to be awarded a Senior Fulbright Fellowship in 1973/4 for his post-doctoral research at Harvard University Herbaria, U.S.A.

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He also spent a few months at the Missouri Botanical Garden, St Louis, a herbarium with the largest African plant collection in the U.S.A.

Prof. Kokwaro has to-date published ten books on diverse topics. They include four parts of the East African flora: Valerianaceae (1968), Geraniaceae (1971), Rutaceae (Orange family, 1982) and Anacardiaceae (Mango family, 1986).

His other books are: Luo English Botanical Dictionary (1972), Medicinal Plants of East Africa (1976), Classification of East African crops (1980), Medicinal plants of East Africa Second Edition (1993), Flowering Plant Families of East Africa, a University textbook for students (1994), Luo Biological Dictionary (1998) and Medicinal Plants of East Africa Third Edition (in press 2008).

Prof. Kokwaro is a leading African scientist, and is a member of many professional societies such as:

- 1966:** East Africa Natural History Society. (Life member and the first indigenous Chairman)
- 1968:** Fellow, Linnaean Society of London (FLS).
- 1983:** Founder Fellow, Kenya National Academy of Sciences (FKNAS).
- 1994:** Member, New York Academy of Sciences.
- 1995:** Fellow, African Academy of Sciences (FAAS).
Appointed the first Executive Director of AAS (1994-6) on secondment from the University of Nairobi.

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Prof. John Kokwaro is a dedicated University Professor who has served the University for forty years (1968-2008) with distinction. In recognition of his distinguished contribution as a scholar and having satisfied the requirements of the Senate, the University of Nairobi is proud to award him the degree of Doctor of Science (D.Sc.).

MR. CHANCELLOR SIR, I am greatly privileged to request you to confer the degree of Doctor of Science (D.Sc) of the University of Nairobi, upon Prof John Onyango Kokwaro.

**LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, PROFESSOR JOHN
ONYANGO KOKWARO.**

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