

Varsity hosts UNESCO/UNITWIN Chairs forum

The Forum whose theme was UNESCO Chairs for Knowledge Creation, Innovation and Sustainable Development in Kenya, sought to review past achievements and challenges faced by UNESCO chairs and establish why Africa has failed to establish more UNESCO university chairs and UNITWIN networks.

The Forum which brought together various stakeholders in the higher education sector, universities, donors, local and international scholars, students and individuals interested in the work of UNESCO, addressed the serious problems occasioned by global climate change, international terrorism, corruption, drug abuse, and rapid unplanned urbanization

During the key note presentation, Prof. Michael Chege, noted that one of the important innovations by UNESCO towards has been the inauguration of the UNESCO/UNITWIN Chairs and Associated Networks.

The overarching goal of the initiative was to promote international inter-university cooperation worldwide, using two institutional approaches. The approaches include the establishment of UNESCO chairs in established universities and creation of University Twinning Networks (UNITWIN) to facilitate synergy and cooperation between university programmes that share common objectives.

Prof. Chege noted that both the UNESCO Chairs and UNITWINS were expected to act as “bridges linking universities to states, policy-makers, civil society” and ordinary citizens. “They were to be vehicles to scientifically tackle the challenges in a manner consistent with UNESCO’s mandate thereby creating vibrant and strategic way of breathing new life into the organization and its member states,” he said.

Speaking on behalf of the Cabinet Secretary, Education Science and Technology, Mrs. Fenny Mwakisha, Director, Higher Education, urged universities to work with UNESCO and Kenya National Commission for UNESCO in maximizing on the opportunities available for the benefit of the country. Mrs. Mwakisha said that there is need for creation of more UNESCO Chairs in the universities which are sustainable and that support UNESCO programme objectives and priorities.

Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbithi lauded UNESCO, for the noble task of building peace in the minds of men and women noting that this has been implemented through addressing freedom from want of basic needs, individual liberty and human rights in their broadest sense, and equal access to information and education for all. Prof. Mbithi said that the University of Nairobi is committed to fully support the UNESCO/UNITWIN Chair at the University.

The forum panelists included Prof. Shem Wandiga, Department of Chemistry, UoN, Dr. Evangeline Njoka, Secretary General, KNATCOM, Dr. Abdul Lamin, Social and Human Sciences Specialist, UNESCO and Dr. Mildred Nawiri, Kenyatta Univeristy.