

Varsity hosts forum to mark world refugee day celebrations

The University of Nairobi (UoN) today, June 17, 2015, hosted a forum dubbed “Get to Know Refugees- their Roles in the Country” in which various speakers gave insights on the plight of refugees in Kenya.

While delivering the key note presentation, Dr. Abbas Gullet, Secretary General, Kenya Red Cross Society noted that according to May 2015 statistics, Kenya is hosting over 586,000 refugees. In his brief, Dr. Gullet highlighted the major changes that have taken place since Kenya started hosting refugees over 30 years ago, stating that many refugees flee from their countries because of wars, famines and droughts.

According to Dr. Gullet, many refugees face victimization in the wake of terrorism and insecurity. Gullet appealed to the government and other stakeholders to address the hurdles faced by refugees engaged in businesses, award work permits and look into the encampment policy thereby improve the living situation in the refugee camps. In addition, Dr. Gullet called on all stakeholders to create an enabling environment that will maximize the potential of refugees in various sectors and professions.

Speaking on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Production and Extension, Prof. Lucy Irungu, the University of Nairobi is committed to academic excellence and continues to be involved in training and research. Prof. Irungu noted that a lot of this research has been geared towards encouraging sustainable development through integration and resilience of communities in Kenya. Given the multicultural and indeed multinational society, the University continues to encourage more research, especially on the impact of refugees on the socio economic and sociopolitical environment.

Prof. Maria Nzomo, Director, Institute of Diplomacy and International Studies (IDIS), who made a presentation on refugees’ contributions to the development of the nation and Prof. Peter Kangwanja who spoke on perceptions about refugees brought to light matter security. The two scholars spoke on the challenges of striking a balance between upholding the rights of refugees and dealing with insecurity in the country noting that there is a concern over refugee heroes and refugee terrorists.

Other who spoke during the interactive forum include Mr. Raouf Mazou, United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) representative, Mr. Harun Komen, Commissioner for Refugee Affairs, Mr. Kenneth Okoth, Member of Parliament, Kibra, among others.

In addition, the University is hosting a 3 day exhibition displaying some of the economic and social activities the refugees are engaging in. The events are part of the series of activities scheduled to take place ahead of the World Refugee Day celebrations marked for June 20, 2015.

The celebrations have been organized by IDIS in partnership with UNHCR, the Government through the Department of Refugee Affairs, Kenya National Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Danish Refugee Council and members of the Refugee Partners Network.

