

## **VC SPEECH AT PROF. MAMA PUBLIC LECTURE**

Invited Guests, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the University of Nairobi community and on my own behalf, I take this opportunity to welcome you all to the University.

I'm grateful to the Institute for Development Studies, the African Leadership Centre and the African Peacebuilding Network of the Social Science Research Council of New York for collaborating to organize this public event.

We are happy to host all of you here. We are especially happy to host Prof. Amina Mama, the Director of Women and Gender Studies, University of California, Davis as speaker at this lecture. We are conscious that Prof. Mama has travelled a long distance from North America to honour us with this lecture and we cannot take this great honour for granted.

This public event comes at an opportune moment both for the University and the continent. Only a few weeks ago, Africa celebrated 50 years of the founding of the OAU. Celebrations are not only a time to take stock of advances in continental unity but also in dealing with issues of development, democracy and Justice.

Gender justice is an important issue we should to constantly take stock of both locally and internationally. Prof. Amina Mama's lecture is therefore apt. Focusing on Global Militarism and the Resilience of African Women, it is properly positioned to assist us understand the long standing issues that affect marginalised communities, the female gender being understood here as a marginalised and indeed exploited community.

At the University of Nairobi, we are keen to initiate, steer and participate in these discussions and to reshape the history of this country and continent not only by studying gender but by intervening where we can to alter gender relations in society. Our core role as a university is not only to teach our students, to research and disseminate our findings to a pliant public. We have a role also in learning from and engaging the wider public in a proactive way. This event represents a learning moment for us but also one where we wish to display our public partisanship for gender justice.

In the last month alone, we have hosted several public events that not only help us connect with the public, but also discuss issues that have serious public policy implications. Today, we direct attention to issues of global militarism and the resilience of African women to illustrate the

extent to which, as a university, we cannot afford to be casual with gender issues. We hope that the Institute for Development Studies, and other departments in the university, will find space to further this conversation and put it on the university and wider public agenda on a daily basis. The citizens of this continent are looking to the universities to spearhead thinking and to indicate the implications of policy on their everyday life. This lecture is an opportunity to do that.

With these few remarks, let me again welcome you to this session and thank you very much for taking time to join us.

Thank you.