



**STATEMENT DURING THE OPENING SESSION OF THE 2ND MERU UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON SDGS FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Prof. Romanus Odhiambo, Ph.D. Vice Chancellor Meru University of Science and Technology;
Dr. Beatrice Muganda Inyangala Principal Secretary, State Department for Higher Education and Research, and the Key note speaker for this function;
Ladies and Gentlemen;
All Protocols observed;

Let me start by expressing my sincerest gratitude to the fraternity of Meru University for extending invitation to speak in this conference.

Secondly, allow me to applaud the management under the leadership of Prof. Romanus Odhiambo for the effort you have put to weave this partnership, including PACJA, which has made it possible to host this event, with the befitting theme;

“Leveraging Interlinkages among the SDGs to Realize the 2030 Agenda through Research and Innovation in the Post-Covid Era”

Such as suitable theme. Covid-19 was, and remains one of the most disruptive moments in memorable times. In addition to changing the way we do things, it tested the tenacity of our institutions, and for made us to change our cultures and attitudes.

The ability of the global community to mobilise resources for vaccine development and reconstruction within record time had no precedented. The lesson learnt from this global collaboration is that in the time of crisis, humanity can come together, rally together and defeat any challenge, however seemingly surmountable – what’s required is solidarity backed by political will.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have drawn your attention to this pandemic and the global response because this is what is required to achieve the agenda 2030, which, as you will definitely agree with me, makes some of us restless.

Less than seven years to 2030 today, there is widespread consternation on whether the 169 targets of the 17 Goals will be met within 90 months, or 2700 days.

In addition to Covid-19, we are grappling with multiple other global crises of monumental proportions - inequality, deepening debt and the Russia-Ukraine war.

Above all these is climate change, which poses existential threats not only to the survival of humanity, but also to ecosystems and the health of the planet upon which all organisms – plants and animals, derive their lives.

And that is my being here today, and the reason for joining the partnership for this conference. Goal 13 of the SDGs seeks to combat climate change and all its impacts, the impacts we can all feel, observe and confront every day.

Buoyed by Goal 17, *partnership for the Goals*, PACJA's cardinal principle is building collaborations at all levels – vertical and horizontal - since we believe that defeating poverty and achieving sustainable development is such enormous challenge that not a single individual, institution, country, region or sector, can do it alone, a new thinking on enabling systemic transformation of our economies, through deep collaboration and shared purpose is essential.

Yet, another emerging, and obviously compelling conversation on whether the current top-down, exclusive model of doing things will deliver us to the zenith we desire, or should there be another way which “leaves no one behind”.

Just last week, I was in Bonn attending the global climate conference, dedicated to the reflections on the implementation of the Paris Agreement, which was adopted the same period with Agenda 2030.

Across the border, World Leaders, including our own, President William Ruto, was attending the “Summit for a new global financing pact” – which, as you may know, has divided observers on whether it will not be another futile effort with such flowery language, and joining others before it into the dustbin of history.

There are many other conversations going on at all levels – including this conference - all pointing to a broken system which needs repair.

The current model of development has failed. The current financial system has irreparably broken, and need drastic reforms. Our modes of production and consumption, addicted to fossil fuels, is no longer an option.

As PACJA, we belong to the school of thought that believes that incremental reforms and fragmented solutions, however genuine they may be, will never sufficiently meet the challenges we face – we should thus urgently adapt our economic and political systems in the most fundamental way. How this will be done should be question which should be answered by us all.

Let me turn my attention to the context within which we are operating.

This conference takes place barely two months to the Africa Climate Summit hosted by HE President Ruto, as the Chair of the African Union's Committee of Heads of State and Government on Climate Change, who, since his election, has joined us as top voices in global geopolitical interactions to exert pressure on those who bear the biggest responsibility on

the climate crisis to honour their commitments to not only take drastic action, but also help victims of their actions. We will continue to work with HE the Chair of CAHOSCC to amplify our voice in all the arena coming our way, in this spirit of partnership we are cultivating at all levels.

Already geostrategic interests seem to be conspiring against progress made in climate commitments, especially implementation of the Nationally Determined Commitments (NDCs) of the Paris Agreement. Notable forces that this conference should be alive to are majorly:

- I. The Russia-Ukraine war that continue to imply on the ability of EU countries to meet their energy needs and the strive by EU countries and other developed countries to revert back to dirty forms of energy – the main source of global warming. They have re-opened their coal mines that had been closed in parts of Europe and more off shore exploration of oil resources, including in the USA, not only to tap on lucrative market but to cushion energy supply chains.
- II. Growing global hunger and largely informed by collapse of food supplies systems partly due to war in Ukraine, but largely in the context of Africa, due to growing frequency of extreme climate change events occasioning crop failure and massive losses of livestock.
- III. Overall, global emissions are going up and this is directly contributing to global temperatures going up at unprecedented level. IPCC AR6 report has aptly captured the challenge – Africa will be impacted under all emission scenarios and this should worry every scientist and prompt for scaling the pack of scientific solutions at our disposal.
- IV. This conference must be part of the discussions to explore collective measures to cushion populations suffering from the severest form of cyclic waves of losses and damages that continue to impede their ability to meet their basic rights.
- V. The global climate change conference in Dubai will happen in quite a difficult context. Curiously, there are indications that the host country for COP28 is likely to shift conversations towards protection of oil-addicted economies and countries. The appointment of Sultan Al Jaber, an oil-addicted mogul as COP28 presidency is an early call on young people from all over Africa, to rise and amplify their voice and raise the bar for accountability if priority issues for Africa will find fair space in dialogue processes in Dubai.

Whereas this is a scientific conference, means of implementing climate mandate should not be lost in the dialogue process and must explore collaborations that support scaling funding, including to research efforts in universities and tertiary institutions of learning.

As PACJA, we associate fully with this conference on “Leveraging Interlinkages among the SDGs to Realize the 2030 Agenda through Research and Innovation in the Post Covid Era”. We believe this is the right thing to do and should be done to scale, not only in Kenya but across Africa with a view to

strengthen Africa's research capacity and its ability to premise its narratives in global dialogue processes.

As I conclude, allow me, on behalf of PACJA, to reassure of our unwavering support to the partnership with MUST, including the discussion to establish Institute for Climate Change and Adaptation. We take note of the ambition of this institute and in regard to:

- i. *Strengthening research on climate resilient and Meru's rich culture*
- ii. *Carry out long term monitoring of ecosystem by documenting changes in biodiversity and ecosystem services*
- iii. *Researching on income inequalities as a result of climate change, and*
- iv. *In capacity development on various issues*

We pledge to commit both technical resource persons and exposure opportunities that will better equip the institute to deliver in its mandate.

Thank you