

Universities Challenged to Participate in the Development of Oil and Gas Sector on 1st July 2016

The University of Nairobi (UoN) in collaboration with Kenya Pipeline Company (KPC) facilitated a very engaging public lecture dubbed, 'Oil and Gas sector in the East African region: Challenges and development'. This first public lecture in this series took place at UoN. Guest speaker was Hon. Charles Keter, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Energy and Petroleum.

Although petroleum exploration in East Africa predates independence, it is only recently that commercially viable oil was found in Turkana County. This, coupled with the findings in Uganda and Tanzania as well as the admission of South Sudan to the EAC marks a golden era for the exploitation of Oil and Gas in East Africa.

During his keynote presentation, Hon. Charles Keter, said that although oil exploration in Kenya started in the 1960s, there have not been enough capitation discussions about the Oil and gas sector in Kenya.

Hon. Keter said that most people who work in the Oil and gas industry in Kenya are foreigners. He challenged the youth to take up courses in the University related to the sector, citing the fact that an oil welder makes up to KES. 400,000 a month. He urged the youth to change their mind set from only white collar jobs. He also challenged the universities to tailor make courses that are relevant to the oil and gas sector.

Prof. Peter Mbithi, Vice Chancellor, University of Nairobi, in his welcoming remarks noted that the solid partnership between the University Of Nairobi and The Kenya Pipeline Company is a strategic collaboration geared towards providing research based information and data to guide this lucrative sector for the benefit of Kenyans.

"From the onset there is an evident lack of capacity in terms of skills and knowledge to convert the opportunities into real wealth for the benefit of our people. The universities must rise to the accession to train skilled manpower and produce research outcomes that are critical to the sustainable development of the sector," he said.

Lack of adequate infrastructure, lack of skills required, high cost of capital, unavailable technology, volatility in the oil and gas sector and unfair trade practices are among the challenges that have been identified in the East African region in the Oil and gas sector.

Mr. Andrew Kamau, Principal Secretary, State Department of Petroleum, during the panel discussions stated that such a forum is very important in creating awareness of the dynamic oil and gas industry. He said that the government has been in talks with HELB to fund education in this sector.

During the panel discussions, Understanding of the Oil and gas sector in depth, Capacity Building, Skills Development, Competence based training and Sustainability are among the recommendations given to address the challenges at hand.

The panellists were Mr. Andrew Kamau, Principal Secretary, State Department of Petroleum, Engineer James Mwangi, Chairman, Energy and Extractives Sector Board, KEPSA, Mr. Joe Sang - Managing Director, Kenya Pipeline Company, Mr. Powell Maimba, Chairman, Petroleum Institute of East Africa, Mr. Daniel Kiptoo, Petroleum Legal Advisor, MoEP. The session was moderated by Ms. Terryanne Chebet of Royal Media Services.