

GUEST SPEAKER

Envoy lauds MKU's internationalisation of higher education



Amb. Eunice Kigenyi, Uganda's Deputy High Commissioner to Kenya

► Mount Kenya University (MKU) has been lauded for providing access to higher education beyond the country's borders. Uganda's Deputy High Commissioner to Kenya, Ambassador Eunice Kigenyi, says the university's internationalisation of higher education should be emulated by others in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

The diplomat is the guest speaker at MKU's 26th graduation ceremony being held in Thika today, where 7,448 students are set to graduate.

The graduation theme is: *'Internationalisation of University Education Towards Development of a Competitive Global Workforce'*.

The ceremony takes place a few days after MKU was ranked among the top universities in Kenya and the Sub-Saharan Africa. The Times Higher Education ranked MKU third in Kenya and 32nd in the region. The ranking

featured 129 universities from 22 countries.

Among other parameters, the ranking sought to assess the impact of universities in addressing some of the toughest challenges that people in the region face. For example, the establishment of the Center for Malaria Elimination at MKU in 2023 addresses one of the region's major diseases. At this centre, MKU installed the Illumina NextSeq 1000 machine, the first next-generation sequencer to be owned by an educational institution in Kenya. This cutting-edge machine is helping MKU undertake genomic research aimed at tackling diseases.

Amb. Kigenyi takes note that MKU has a global outlook and collaborates widely with institutions from across the world.

The University established a sister institution in Rwanda, and has footprints in Burundi, Uganda and Hargeisa - Somaliland. In addition, the university has lecturers drawn from nations such as India, Germany and Nigeria, among others. Moreover, MKU's alumni serve in many countries across the world.

The diplomat urges universities to help humanity attain Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8 on 'Decent Work and Economic Growth'. She challenges them to develop and operationalise a strategy for youth employment.

MKU has many international collaborations that facilitate student and staff exchanges, and is involved in numerous joint research projects with universities outside Kenya and Africa.



Equity Bank's General Manager for Food and Agriculture, Florence Kariuki presents a 3,800USD (Ksh500,000) AYuTe prize to MKU's winning duo, Esbon Ogetto and Bettinah Maruti

Varsity opens more opportunities for high-level entrepreneurial learning

► Innovation and entrepreneurship are hitting new levels at Mount Kenya University (MKU) as international collaborations open new doors of opportunities for students.

Learners are undergoing training locally and abroad, with groups of them coming up with some award-winning ideas as a result.

Last week, two MKU students won \$3,800 after emerging second runners-up in the ideation category of the African Youth and Technology (AYuTe) Challenge organised by Heifer International.

Nanaheal Enterprise, an agri-tech start-up by Esbon Ogetto and Bettinah Maruti, excelled at the awarding gala hosted during the Kenya Innovation Week.

More than 300 applicants participated in the challenge, with Nanaheal finishing as second runners-up. The start-up is part of beneficiaries of SKIES Business Incubation Programme - a World Bank-funded initiative. SKIES stands for Strengthening

Kenya's Innovation Ecosystem.

Nanaheal has been nurtured at the MKU Innovation and Incubation Centre, which offers vital resources, including mentorship, training, and networking opportunities designed to help start-ups scale their solutions. With this support, Nanaheal developed a unique process to re-purpose pineapple waste into carbon-negative fertiliser.

Meanwhile, 400 MKU students are set to undergo practical entrepreneurship training for the next two years. This is under the Students Training for Entrepreneurial Promotion (STEP) programme offered by MKU and Germany's Leuphana University.

Thus, by December 2026, a total of 1,600 MKU students will have undergone this training, given that so far, 1,200 have been trained since 2018.

MKU's certified STEP trainers conduct the training, and have also helped to train other 2,000 young people in general from 15 counties since 2018. Nearly 50 MKU trainers are involved in

delivering this programme across the country.

In another international initiative, 65 MKU students have embarked on a transformative journey through the 'Africa Meets Bavaria' project. This is a two-year initiative funded by the Bavarian State Chancellery.

MKU's Innovation and Incubation Centre is the bridge connecting African ingenuity with Bavarian innovation, fostering entrepreneurial collaboration that transcends borders.

According to MKU's Head of Innovations, Intellectual Property and Community Engagement, Mr Donatus Njoroge, the students will learn to design and implement real-world digital solutions while developing entrepreneurial skills. Selected learners will also be sponsored for a two-month internship in Bavaria in 2025.

Already, over 40 MKU students have completed the introductory training, earning certificates from the Technical University of Munich, a world-renowned institution.

Chancellor on why varsity embraces extensive partnerships

Many hands make work lighter in higher education too, says Mount Kenya University (MKU) Chancellor Prof John Struthers as he urges universities to welcome collaborations in the training of students.

Prof Struthers says that consortia such as those MKU is involved in have been highly beneficial to learners, who go on to become globally-oriented professionals.

The University has established strong and diverse collabora-

tions with leading institutions in Europe, Japan, and Africa, to enhance research, innovation, and academic exchanges. One of the collaborating institutions is the University of the West of Scotland (UWS), where Prof Struthers teaches.

The don describes MKU as an international hub for manpower development. This is evidenced by the number of foreign students who study at the University, currently numbering more than 6,000.



Prof. John Struthers, MKU Chancellor

The university's engagement with the international community stretches many years back. For example, in 2018, MKU joined the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI) platform of universities committed to supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda.

In November 2019, MKU became the first African university to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with UN Volunteers (UNV) to support five students through internships at the

UN offices.

In 2021, the University became a Global Hub for Reduced Inequalities.

In September 2024, 26 students studying at MKU in Thika, joined the Millennium Fellowship 2024 Class. This gave them a unique opportunity for the internationalisation of their campus experiences as a way towards capacity development in their diverse areas of training, and in line with SDGs.