

**Remarks by Dr Kilemi Mwiria, Chairman of Kenya National
Qualifications Authority on the Authority's Council Inauguration
(19th August 2020; KNQA Boardroom)**

Thank you Dr Julius Jwan, PS Vocational and Technical Training, for coming to inaugurate the 2nd KNQA Council and all of you for joining us today. We are grateful to HE President Uhuru Kenyatta, through the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Prof George Magoha, for appointing me and the rest of the KNQA council members to serve on this extremely critical national Authority for the next three years. I am personally happy that this appointment coincides with my recent work experience. In addition to my prior responsibilities as an academic and policymaker in government, I have recently completed phase 1 of a UNESCO assignment on the development of a regional education qualifications framework for IGAD member states.

- Appointment of this council is particularly welcome as the Authority has been running without one for the last 2 years, which has slowed down its key activities and programmes.
- The Council is designed to bring together all players in the training, skills development, and employment sectors in Kenya, including: Basic, TVET, University, Labour and Industrial Training, represented here by Mr. Gwiyo Komora, Dr. Kipkrui Langat, Mr. Isaac Gathirwa, and Eng. Stephen Ogenga, respectively. KNQA will also partner with workers unions and their umbrella organization COTU, the Federation of Kenya Employers, and the private sector, represented by Sr. Damaris Muhika and Mr. Hirji Shah. Our parent Ministry of Education is represented by Joseph Nyamora, while Mr. Isaiah Ochelle, is standing in for the Ministry of Finance, both key KNQA stakeholders.
- KNQA is mandated by the Constitution to oversee all examinations certificate granting institutions from the Kenya National examinations Council to universities to ensure regulation, equating and harmonization of the qualifications and certificates awarded in the country. Its establishment is part of a growing international practice to

better regulate and define qualifications nationally, regionally, and globally.

- We are lucky to be backed by a qualified professional team, albeit a lean one, and one well equipped to address all matters affecting qualifications and certificates as they relate to: curriculum development, occupational standards, training, accreditation, quality assurance, assessment and examinations, credit accumulation and transfer, recognition of prior learning, and skills development in general. In this role, we shall partner with other regulators (TVETA, CUE, and ESQAC of the Ministry of Education to harmonize the standards for training and skills development in the country.
- In the long run, the intention is to equate and harmonize educational standards and certificates across the East Africa region and the African Continent, and ultimately with the rest of the World. This way, our young people can move to any part of the World and have their qualifications recognized for both further training and employment. Within the East Africa region, a medical degree awarded by Kampala International University should be equal to the one awarded by the University of Nairobi, University of Dar Es Salaam, and by similar regional institutions.
- What this means is that those being awarded a degree or certificate must possess the same entry qualifications, learned a similar curriculum, and trained under similar circumstances regarding their lecturers and institutional facilities. KNQA will therefore play its role in ensuring the improvement of the quality of the education provided by Kenya's training and employment sectors by creating a world-class qualifications system, which can produce competent graduates, employees and entrepreneurs ready to take the country to the next level and to compete regionally and internationally.
- This will be achieved thorough a rigorously developed qualifications framework to enable objective setting of standards for training, assessment and certification to ensure that the country generates the right qualifications to drive vital sectors of our economy and the public

sector, namely: top natural and social scientists, technologists and engineers, medical doctors, public administrators, business persons and other relevant personnel. The national qualifications framework will be the principal instrument for ascertaining learner achievement and quality assurance by closely assessing records of what has been learned and achieved and by registering these qualifications to enable national recognition of acquired skills and knowledge for an integrated, robust and vibrant system that recognizes prior, current and life-long learning.

- KNQF is also about promoting equitable access and equity regarding the quality, relevance and achievement of qualifications by applying an objective evidence-based and flexible evaluation of competencies gained while recognizing intervening factors such as age, experience, economic ability, years of schooling and the diversity of qualifications and certificates rolled out by the various public and private training institutions. It is not acceptable that one can join university with a D grade and another with an A and end up with the same degree, and yet the D grade holder has not done the relevant upgrading to bring her to the level of a deserving undergraduate student. Nor is it fair for some diplomas to be undertaken for 3 months and others for a year or two; or for one PhD to be achieved after two years and another after four or five. The “hop-step and jump” achievement route, and the “boiling” and “buying” of certificates is grossly unfair to those learners who merit their places in educational institutions, employers, and the public. Such a system is particularly unfair to the poor who get doubly disadvantaged; they work hard with limited resources to secure a qualification which they cannot sell on graduation, yet those not nearly as qualified secure both the certificate and the job.

Since its establishment, the KNQA has faced several challenges, among them;

- Inadequate funding for its exceptionally large mandate of overseeing qualifications from early childhood to post-PhD. including the accreditation of national and foreign qualifications’ awarding

institutions. Due to a scarcity of the required funds there has been an accumulation of applications for accreditation, and thus a proliferation of fake and fraudulent certificates in the country.

- Unpreparedness of some of the holders of certificates and qualifications that do not measure to the KNQA assessment framework and standards to accept evaluation results of their documents, with some even posing a security threat to KNQA staff;
- Commercialization of tertiary and higher education which has resulted in mass production of thousands of questionable diplomas, undergraduate and graduate degrees, PhDs, and other qualifications of questionable value;
- An unhealthy competition engineered by officers of some established state agencies who have yet to come to terms with the reality that KNQA has the overall and final authority on vetting and recognition of qualifications awarded in Kenya and in other countries where Kenyans enroll for education.

Although the establishment of the qualification's framework has been rather slow, we are happy with the strides made so far. As a council we would like to appreciate our Director-General and CEO, Dr. Juma Mukhwana, and his skeletal team for laying a sound foundation for the huge and challenging task ahead. Going forward we shall:

- Scale up our activities to ensure that all institutions generating certificates in the country and accredited by the authority as set out by the law abide by the KNQA regulations.
- Work with partnering state agencies and the private sector to ensure that Kenya produces world-class qualifications to transform the country and make us competitive globally;
- Work with all Kenyans of goodwill to strengthen the institution of the KNQA so that it can deliver on its mandate.
- Carry out awareness-raising workshops with education stakeholders on what KNQA is and why we must support its work. As of today, most Kenyans do not know what the Authority is about.

We thus call upon Kenyans who care for quality and equity in education to partner with us to ensure that our country retains her position as the undisputed leader in the field of education in our region, and for our youths to be easily acceptable wherever they go job searching because they will be equipped with qualifications equal to the best, internationally. We owe this to the country and our children because:

- No country can develop without a large pool of highly qualified human resources. Thus, if only those who have the money and family connections can pay for the best education and buy degrees and diplomas, we shall be leaving out the majority from participating in development for themselves, their families and Kenya.
- Together, we must eradicate a culture where some Kenyans think it is OK to buy qualifications than work for them because such a trend can only have disastrous consequences for the country. Think of architects designing crumbling buildings, PhD holders teaching undergraduate students sometimes better equipped academically than the teacher, unqualified doctors performing surgeries on a public with utmost faith in the doctor, engineers designing and overseeing construction of sub-standard bridges, procurement officers who are outsmarted by contractors without the benefit of their level of education, ETC.
- Because we intend to lead by example, we have pledged to have our qualifications vetted even as we vet other state and public officers.

Education will only contribute to the positive change hardworking and honest Kenyans would like to witness, if merit and genuine certification remain the hallmark of determining who proceeds from one level of education to another and who secures which job. If you are a Kenyan committed to the fight against corruption, please demonstrate this passion at the education front, because those who steal certificates will steal public resources many times more if given the opportunity.

Thank You

Kilemi Mwiria