

**Opening Speech for the Consultative Meeting on Social Health Protection Mechanisms
in the Republic of Kenya**

Panafic Hotel, Nairobi, April 10th 2014

Prof. Jane Kabubo-Mariara, Director, School of Economics, University of Nairobi

Representatives of Development Partners...

Representative of Ministry of Health...

Ladies and gentlemen,

All protocols observed.

On behalf of the University of Nairobi, School of Economics, I am pleased to welcome you to this official opening of a national consultative meeting aimed at analyzing the current status of social health protection services in Kenya. This assessment is being done in all the EAC member states and Rwanda is proud to contribute to this exciting and constructive debate because of the tremendous achievements in the area of social health protection achieved so far.

Your presence amongst us underscores the importance of this endeavor that countries in the EAC region have taken to move forward the integration of policies and programs towards harmonized social protection mechanism in general and social health protection in particular. Protecting the health of the population living in the East African Community is an extremely important component of the common market protocol because as people move within the region, they need to continue benefiting from protection against catastrophic health expenditure when they need care. As you know, nobody can predict when or where he or she will become sick and nobody can plan ahead to get sick care for an accident. Think about the flow of EAC citizens crossing borders everyday. There is need to create a mechanism for social protection in the host country.

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

To achieve the Millennium Development Goals, the East African Community has decide to move towards universal health coverage; this important dream calls for an effort to understand the picture of each country when it comes to social health protection services and from there to move towards harmonization of policies and programs. It is in this context that with the support of GIZ, the East African Community has commissioned a study aimed at analyzing the current situation and a feasibility of a social health protection mechanism in the region.

Through a competitive process with renowned global leaders in such studies, a consortium composed of schools of public health/Economics from EAC region and research institutes won the tender to assess the status of social health protection mechanisms in the region and to propose the way forward towards harmonization. I am very proud that the School of Economics is part of this project. We are enthusiastic that you will take the opportunity to share our experiences and benefit from other countries' experiences in order to move forward together.

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and gentlemen,

The objective of this workshop is to voice Kenya's opinion on how the EAC Partner States can move forward the social health protection agenda in the region through harmonization of existing policies and legal frameworks to ensure that our people are socially protected against diseases, among others. Whereas my colleagues will present the current situation of social health protection in Kenya, you will have the huge task to think creatively and contribute to how Kenyas and other EAC citizens can benefit from harmonized social health protection services across the region.

I wish you a fruitful discussion and deliberations and thank you for your attendance.