

**Speech of the Principal of College of Health Sciences-
University of Nairobi, Prof Isaac Kibwage on 23/03/16
during Oral Health Summit and Health Agenda at
Radisson Blu hotel, Nairobi, Kenya.**

The cabinet secretary for lands, Housing and Urban
Development- Prof Jacob Kaimenyi,

The CS Health – Dr Cleopha Maillu, Represented by Dr.
Odongo- Deputy Director of Medical Services

Director, Columbia global centers – Dr. Belay Begashaw

Social Missions Director- Unilever, Dr Myriam Sidibe

Invited guests, Ladies and gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to join you this morning to participate and
witness the events of this two day oral health and Health
agenda summit.

I am delighted to note that the summit has been deliberating on oral health as an important component of the general health and the policy therein.

For a long time the oral health agenda has been low keyed and less prioritized compared to other components of health. I suppose this is true not only in Africa but also in other developed countries including the United States.

In my view, the reason behind this scenario is not that oral health plays a peripheral role our bodies, but it is because for long time, majority of us have given it a negative label without any basis.

Subsequently, this fallacy shifted into the minds of planners in governments and other institutions, policy makers and other important stakeholders in health care delivery. Now note with gratitude that in the recent past, this scenario seems to be slowly changing in Kenya and elsewhere as evidenced by a number of factors including the more dental schools being established, increased student intake in the dental schools, increased uptake of

dental care services from the various providers, increased dental care insurances among others.

It is important to note that strong national economies are build on the premises of strong physical health of the mwananchi. Dental health is part of this general health and as such there is need to entrench it adequately and appropriately in the health care delivery system and agenda of any one country.

I think, it is against this not very rosy oral background that this summit is being held.

It is said, **it is never too late to start anything**. This morning I want to emphasize that although it has taken too long for many of us to truly appreciate the important role of oral health in our livelihoods; it is not too late yet. I want to challenge all of us here and especially the policy makers, to appreciate this reality and deliberately embark on making policies that support and promote oral health in our respective countries. It is possible. Kenya for example, has a strong case, especially with current statistics from the recently concluded national oral health survey.

I am aware that the summit drew stakeholders from different professional backgrounds as well as from different countries. With this kind of skill mix and expertise, my expectations are that, you will be able come up with strong evidence based statements that will inform policy making and thus bring about a paradigm shift in the oral health agenda management in - School Of Dental Sciences for developing a Memorandum of understanding between the two institutions. It is an initiative that will strengthen the collaboration between the two institutions and especially in the field of research. The University of Nairobi of Nairobi considers and embraces research as an important component of its mandate. Further, other stakeholders in health care delivery in Kenya such as the ministry of Health, the county governments and Faith based institutions will benefit from this initiative.

Thank you so much as I wish you well in the rest of your proceedings.