

**SPEECH FOR THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, KEMRI, PROF. SAM KARIUKI, DURING THE
OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 12TH KEMRI ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC AND HEALTH (KASH)
CONFERENCE HELD ONLINE FROM 16TH - 18TH FEBRUARY 2022**

***The Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Health, Hon. Matahi Kagwe
The Chairman, KEMRI Board of Directors, Dr. Daniel M. Mbinda;
KEMRI Board of Directors Present;
Chairman, KASH, Conference Organizing Committee – Dr. Cecilia Mbae
All key Plenary Speakers;
KEMRI Senior Management members and staff present;
Distinguished Scientists & Participants joining us online,
Ladies and Gentlemen,***

Good Morning!

I take this opportunity to welcome you all to the 12th KEMRI Annual Scientific and Health (KASH) Conference that begins this morning, 16th to 18th February 2022. It is indeed, an exciting moment for KEMRI to host a hybrid Conference of 80 percent physical and 20 percent virtual, which is a considerable improvement from last year where we had 100 percent virtual conference. Today we witness a memorable occasion where we take early minutes of this conference to launch the Malaria Rapid Diagnostic Kit, which was developed by our very own distinguished scientists at KEMRI. Apart from the Malaria kit we will also have an opportunity to also launch various COVID-19 related products developed by KEMRI.

Our Guest of Honour, the KEMRI Annual Scientific and Health conference popularly known as KASH is a forum that serves to promote health science through dialogue and exchange among scientists, health practitioners, development partners and policy makers with an anticipated 500 participants in attendance. The findings, conclusions and recommendations of this conference will contribute directly to the national discourse managing pandemics, universal Health coverage (UHC) and development.

I am equally happy to report that the theme of the upcoming conference is, ***“Building a resilient health sector through investments in data science, research evidence, technology and innovations.”*** It is worth noting that we have several other sub themes for the conference that include: Strengthening Health Systems, Mental Health & Other Non-communicable Diseases, Drug Discoveries & Therapeutics, Essential Sexual, Reproductive, Adolescents, Maternal & Child Health, Emerging and Re-emerging Infectious and Parasitic Diseases Prevention, Control and Elimination, Genomics, Diagnostics, Vaccine Development, & Innovations, Climate Change and Zoonoses.

Ladies & Gentlemen, The KASH Conference is a special event in the Institute's calendar and we are honoured to have very special guests joining this conference both virtually and physically. I would also like to take this opportunity to sincerely, thank my colleagues at the KASH Organizing Committee led by the Chair Dr. Cecilia Mbae and her committee members who have worked tirelessly to overcome all the odds and vagrancies posed by COVID-19 pandemic to make this Conference a reality. I also want to pay special tribute to the immediate outgoing, KASH Conference Chairman, Prof. Charles Mbogo who I must say has done a commendable job for the last six years. We celebrate you Prof. Mbogo and thank you for your dedication and service that has seen KASH grow into what it is today.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the 12th KASH Conference is a forum for dissemination of research findings and networking not just for the young scientists, but also for our more experienced scientists. The official launching of the KEMRI products the malaria Rapid Kits and the SARS-CoV-2 RT-PCR kit among others show case the capabilities and innovativeness of our scientists right here at KEMRI

Distinguished participants, please allow me to highlight a few items that stand out in the 12th KASH Conference programme. This year's Conference theme is not just timely for the country and the rest of Africa, but I dare say globally, thanks to the prevailing COVID-19 global pandemic, which has ravaged the entire globe.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, It is refreshing to note that at out of the 203 abstracts received, 192 were accepted for presentation with one keynote speaker during the plenary session while six of them were slotted for the plenary talks on different thematic areas which include COVID -19. The conference is also hosting 5 symposia and 25 scientific sessions. I look forward to a robust discussion that will come up with resolutions and I believe solutions that are not just timely, but responsive and result-oriented to our current realities in our health systems.

Finally, allow me to take this opportunity to also, sincerely appreciate the KEMRI Board of Directors, led by our Board Chair, Dr. Daniel M. Mbinda. The Board has not only supported this Conference, but as management, we have continued to benefit from their wisdom, guidance and direction.

I wish to also sincerely thank all the participants of this Conference, Most sincere appreciations to all our partners and collaborators who have supported most of this work being presented here today. Finally, to the Government of Kenya through the Ministry of Health who have given us moral and financial support towards making this conference a success.

I trust and believe that we will have a good and successful conference and I thank you all for your participation and support.
God bless you all.

Prof. Sam Kariuki
Ag. Director General,
KENYA MEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE