

SPEECH FOR THE CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF HEALTH MUTAHI KAGWE, DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE 12TH KEMRI ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC AND HEALTH (KASH) CONFERENCE HELD BOTH ONLINE AND PHYSICALLY FROM 15TH -18TH FEBRUARY 2022 AT SAFARI PARK HOTEL, NAIROBI

- **The Chairman, KEMRI Board of Directors - Dr. Daniel M. Mbinda;**
- **KEMRI Board of Directors Present;**
- **The Acting Director General, KEMRI- Prof. Sam Kariuki;**
- **Chairman, KASH Conference Organizing Committee – Dr. Cecilia Mbae**
- **All Key Plenary Speakers;**
- **KEMRI Senior Management and Staff present;**
- **Distinguished Scientists & Participants joining us online,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Good Morning!

I am extremely delighted to be with you this morning for the official opening of the 12th KEMRI Annual Scientific and Health (KASH) Conference, during which you will launch some of the latest innovative products from KEMRI and celebrate continued attainment of the ISO 9001: 2015 certification.

Let me also take this opportunity to sincerely thank the KEMRI Management for successfully organizing this important conference now for the 12th year running. It is equally gratifying to note that this conference has attracted more than 500 participants most of them joining us physically and the rest online both from Kenya and abroad.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Let me commend KEMRI for having played a pivotal role in supporting the government's effort right from when the first case of COVID-19 pandemic was reported in the country to its continued work in surveillance and genomic sequencing that has provided policy recommendations that continue to shape the government decisions in the response and containment of the pandemic. In addition, I am delighted to note that KEMRI played a key role in clinical trials for the malaria and cervical cancer vaccines that were launched last year.

I am informed that the conference attracted 192 abstracts, a majority addressing our current health challenges especially the COVID-19 pandemic and these will include refreshing keynote speeches, plenary sessions at least five symposia and 25 scientific sessions. As a Ministry, we are delighted when great minds come together to discuss health issues and particularly on how we can deal with pandemics such as the one we are currently in.

I am happy to note that our research capacity has greatly improved and I am confident that as a government we will continue to support KEMRI to ensure that we effectively and swiftly deal with future pandemics.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is therefore equally gratifying for me to officiate in the commissioning two research innovations and products namely;- the Malaria Rapid Diagnostic Kit, (PlamoCheck) and the PCR COVID-19 testing kit (KEMCoV PCR), both of which were developed by your own distinguished scientists at KEMRI. These two kits will go a long way in improving Malaria diagnostics and COVID-19 disease detection, which remain our foremost health challenges not just in Kenya but globally. I congratulate the team and leadership for having taken up the challenge by H.E. the President Uhuru Kenyatta to come up with local solutions to our local problems.

I confirm that my Ministry will support KEMRI with not only the continued production of these kits, but will also be the main consumers of these products to ensure continuous research and improvement now and in future.

Ladies and Gentlemen, these innovations that we shall commission shortly are true demonstration of the KEMRI spirit. I understand that KASH is a forum that serves to promote health science through dialogue and exchange among scientists, health practitioners, development partners and policy makers and that its findings, conclusions and recommendations directly contribute to the national discourse on not just managing pandemics but also a reflection on our Universal Health Coverage (UHC) journey among other key developments. I challenge you, as the KEMRI fraternity to do more in other areas of research to address the many health challenges we face in Kenya. Let this year's theme: ***"Building a resilient health sector through investments in data science, research evidence, technology and innovations"***, be a new beginning for us in the health sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we all know that the true test of research is whether people use it – for reference, for influence, and most importantly for change.

I look forward to robust discussions that result in solutions that are not just timely, but responsive and result-oriented to our current realities in our health systems.

It is now my singular pleasure to commission the following research products:

- **KEMCoV PCR KIT- COVID-19**
- **PlamoCheck mRDT KIT – Malaria**
- **ISO 9001:2015 Certification**

I take this opportunity to declare the 12th KASH Conference officially open.

**Hon. Mutahi Kagwe, EGH,
CABINET SECRETARY FOR HEALTH**

**Delivered by: Dr. Rashid Aman
CAS, Ministry of Health**