



**KENYATTA  
UNIVERSITY**

**BELMONT  
FORUM**

UComNetSus-Africa Project  
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Date: 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021

**REMARKS FROM THE PROJECT'S CONSORTIUM LEAD DURING  
THE STAKEHOLDERS' WORKSHOP ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF  
NAIROBI CITY SCHEDULED ON 10<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2021 AT KUCC AT  
9.00AM**

**Introduction:** Our Vice-Chancellor, Kenyatta University, Prof. Paul Wainaina, Deputy Vice-Chancellor in charge of Research, Innovation and Outreach, Prof. Frederick Gravenir, Dean School of Environmental Studies, distinguished stakeholders of Nairobi city, colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen. Good morning!

Today, Vice-Chancellor sir, I am extremely happy for accepting to open this special stakeholder workshop for Nairobi city.

**Problem:** With your permission, Vice-Chancellor, allow me to say that this gathering is an outcome of an idea that was conceptualized in August 2020. This was driven by the fact that rapid urbanisation was taking place across Africa, where some cities were experiencing an urbanisation rate of over 4%. Science informs us that at the rate, the form, structure, and functionality of most cities are overwhelmed resulting into



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environmental degradation, pollution and poverty. These outcomes completely destabilize the pathways to sustainability of African cities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, addressing environmental degradation, pollution and poverty in cities is extremely difficult. This is because cities are complex socio-ecological systems. That is why, to fully conceptualize the problems facing cities, there was needed to work with a multidisciplinary team.

**Proposal development:** Coincidentally, the Belmont Forum, announced a call for proposal on the theme ‘transdisciplinary research for pathways to sustainability’. The minimum criteria to qualify for funding was to have a multinational and multidisciplinary research consortium. Identifying and convening such a diverse research consortium was challenging. Therefore, it took almost a month to consolidate and convince a team that could work together.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the year 2020 was reigned by COVID-19, and our resilience was put to test. That is, after numerous virtual discussions, a strong team of eight (8) experts agreed to walk the journey. Hence, a working title on “Building urban community networks for sustainable cities in Africa” was formulated. Indeed, it gives me pleasure to see what we achieved in the middle of the pandemic!



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**Principal Investigators:** Vice Chancellor sir, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to acknowledge in absentia the team of the eight (8) experts for the project namely; Dr. Josephine Malonza from the University of Rwanda in Rwanda, Dr. Benjamin Campion from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in Ghana, Dr. Olufemi Taiwo from Georgetown University in USA, Dr. Margaret Owuor from South Eastern Kenya University in Kenya, Mr. Olusola Adeoye from Nature Cares Resource Centre in Nigeria, Mr. Shabani Soah from the University of Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania, and present today, Dr. David Mugo from University of Embu, and finally but not least, myself from this wonderful institution, Kenyatta University.

**Focus cities:** Ladies and Gentlemen, the team agreed to form a consortium that would investigate the sustainability gaps in the following cities: Nairobi in Kenya, Dar Es Salaam in Tanzania, Kigali in Rwanda, Lagos in Nigeria, Kumasi in Ghana and Mombasa in Kenya. I would like to inform you that the activities we are undertaking here today, are also being implemented in the named cities.

**Sustainability:** Notably, the concept of sustainability touches on social, economic, and ecological needs of the current and future generations. This project, therefore, is anchored in the 2015-2030 UN framework on Sustainable Development Goals and the 2020 implementation framework for the New Urban Agenda in Africa. For Nairobi and Mombasa, activities are also aligned to the New Urban Agenda for Kenya, Kenya Vision 2030, and the Big Four Agenda. For example, the New Urban agenda for Kenya aims to realize equal rights and opportunities, public participation,



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and equal access to physical and social infrastructure, adequate and affordable housing, sustainable and inclusive urban economies, well-planned urbanization, high productivity, competitiveness, innovation, promoting clean energy, sustainable use of land and resources, protecting ecosystems and biodiversity and ensuring sustainable consumption and production patterns.

**Partnership:** This being the first major activity for the project, your presence would not have come at a better time. We acknowledge the commendable work your organisations are doing to improve the wellbeing of Kenyans. The project, therefore, is interested in learning from your experiences, hence build on the synergies among all the stakeholders present for a sustainable and resilient Nairobi city. Ladies and Gentlemen, we value your inputs, hence we request you to walk with us in this, and in other projects we are implementing. Finally, I thank you all for the respect and commitment you have demonstrated by attending this important workshop.

Thank you and God bless you,

Dr. Peter W. Wangai

Consortium Lead, UComNetSus-Africa project