



Speech by Prof. P.N. Kioni- Vice Chancellor on the 2nd International Conference on African Liberation

- Prof. Shellemiah Keya- Chancellor
- DVC's Prof. G.K. Muthakia, Prof. M.K. Gachari and Prof. P.Wambua
- Teachers and Students
- Guest
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to DeKUT and to this very important 2nd International conference on African Liberation. Dedan Kimathi University of Technology is named after the freedom fighter Dedan Wachiuri Kimathi, hence is part of a memorial to all the freedom fighters and to Kenyan's liberation struggles. In the last five years, the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT) fraternity has worked to give value and meaning to this aspect of the university identity. In regard every February, the university has marked the Kimathi week, which is a specific week selected to be around 18th February, the date Kimathi was executed. There have been various positive experiences arising from hosting the Kimathi Week.

1. The event has been taken up by Kimathi University students as one key activity in their academic calendar.

2. The neighbouring community has responded with lots of enthusiasm and pride to the activities organized during the week.
3. The government through the Ministry of State for Culture and National Heritage also recognizes and appreciates the role that Dedan Kimathi University has played in filling this gap of the National history. In 2011, the Ministry recognized the 59th commemorative ceremony of Dedan Kimathi's execution by sending its officials and requesting DeKUT to host the function on their behalf.

The then Kimathi University College of Technology Council (KUCT) ,the predecessor of Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT), approved the establishment of a Mau Mau Education Centre (MMEC) in 2012.

There has been a number of scholars, authors, and people keen on the history of the freedom fighters who at one time or another have expressed interest in sharing materials and knowledge with other Kenyans through the University. Indeed in the last few years, three authors i.e. Prof.Kanogo, Muthoni Likimani and The Nyeri Catholic Archdiocese facilitation to get a copy of the Dedan Kimathi's letter before execution have donated materials to the university.

In 2009, the university organized a lecture where the former Chancellor, late Prof. Ali Mazrui was invited to give a lecture and during the talk, he devoted part of the time discussing the Mau Mau struggle in the context of the history of the black people and struggle for freedom in Africa, Americas and the rest of the world.

The trustees of KUCT, the predecessor of Dedan Kimathi University of Technology had discussed and made some initial arrangement(s) towards the establishment of a hero's garden as part of a memorial to Kenya's liberation heroes in line with the history of the institution. They had established a fund for this purpose, with an initial KES. 500,000/= (five hundred thousands) .Currently the institution has grown and is an intellectual centre and also being a University named after Dedan Kimathi, it is expected internationally to be a reference point when it comes to matters to do with Kenyan's independence struggle beginning from the 1940's, 50's and 60's and specifically on matters of the Mau Mau efforts and African Liberation.

The independence struggle is still an area of great international interest and even though this happened over fifty years ago, there are still scholars around the world-Europe, Britain, United States, South Africa and other parts of the world who still study and continue to write on the African Liberation and Mau Mau effort. Furthermore in Kenya, it is still a live issue and it generates lots of interest.

In this regard, the centre will support the development of this for a common historical heritage for all Kenyans. With this in mind the University management found it worth to take this vision of the trustees a notch higher and actualize it-hence the proposed MMEC.

Since year 2009 this University has observed a Kimathi week around 18th February. During the week the students and staff engage in a number of activities aimed generally at commemorating the historic achievement of the Field Marshall Dedan Kimathi after whom this University is named and also appreciating the sacrifices made by the

freedom fighters for the independence of this country. The commemoration involves a range of activities. The students go out into the community to assist the destitute. They engage in cleaning of Nyeri town and undertake other acts of selfless service to others. They also deliberately engage in cultural and educational activities aimed at making Kenya a better country for its entire people. In this regard also the activities include public lectures by distinguished academics. This is the seventh Kimathi week at this University since 2009.

Whereas the first Kimathi week was essentially an affair marked by DeKUT students and staff, subsequent events have drawn interest from a wider public. Increasingly we have seen growth of other such activities in this region organized independently of the University.

Dedan Kimathi University of Technology (DeKUT), by its very name, is one of the best memorials to the freedom fighter Dedan Kimathi Waciuri and more importantly to the Mau Mau contribution to the fight for Kenya's independence. The African Liberation defined in very unique ways the Africans' quest for independence. Furthermore, the Mau Mau struggle and African Liberation for independence has great historical significance in the efforts of black people all over the world. It is the practice world over that an institution named after a hero, such as Dedan Kimathi, and which is a memorial to such a critical period of a country's history would be a point of reference for scholars and students of history all over the world seeking such information. This practice is well established in the developed western countries; the US former Presidents' Libraries serve as useful reference points.

The main objective of the Mau Mau Educational centre is to serve as a repository of the educational and research materials covering the African liberation and Mau Mau period and to organize this in a way that they are readily available and usable by ordinary people; young students, students of history and researchers. Furthermore, it is intended that the centre may also receive primary materials or hold information on where such material may be available.

Already quite a lot has been accomplished.

- Preliminary information gathering activities from the surviving Mau Mau war veterans. This was done at Nyandarua (including the widow of the late Wachiuri Kimathi), Nakuru (Ndeffo) and Naivasha areas.
 - (1) A workshop in September 2012 at the Green Hills Hotel which laid the groundwork for the goals to be attained including the work matrix.
 - (2) A second workshop in September 2013 at the University boardroom where several scholars i.e. Prof. Peter Ndege (Moi university) as team leader, Prof.R.Matheka(Egerton university), Dr.F.K.Kinyanjui (K.U) and Muthoni Likimani, deliberated on the subject of Mau Mau.
 - (3) An International Conference in February 2013 at the University and which brought together several scholars and in which several academic papers were presented; further generating a lot of interest in the subject; and

(4) Produced on conference proceedings report for the 1st conference; and

- Architectural drawings for the proposed centre complete with the various facilities; and the design of the “Dedan Kimathi University Heroes Park “done.
- Some space in front of the resource centre has been designated the heroes garden. A brief on a statue for Field Marshall Dedan Kimathi has been developed. It is to be noted that two former trustees of the Kimathi Institute of Technology, Mr. Duncan Ndegwa and Mr. Amos Wamunyu had raised Kshs 500,000 for this activity.
- Work on the repository has started. Working with Prof. Tabitha Kanogo, a list of bibliographical references has been developed and shall be available at the University. Furthermore, we have been receiving books and other materials from researchers and scholars on Mau Mau. Recently, Muthoni Likimani donated copies of her books to the University and Prof. Tabitha Kanogo is donating her collection of books in this area. We are also collaborating with the Director of the National Archives to establish what is available in the archives; the letter from Dedan Kimathi.
- Work is underway to conduct a major fundraising to establish a special endowment fund to support scholarships linked to the commemoration. It is to be noted prominent Kenyans have benefitted from scholarships given in commemoration of famous people abroad. A good example is the highly competitive Rhodes scholarship named after the famous colonial adventurer Cecil

Rhodes. The University would like to promote this kind of commemoration of Kenya heroes by giving scholarships in their names beginning with hero the University is named after.

Welcome all to this second international conference on African Liberation!