



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

SPEECH BY DR. BEATRICE INYANGALA, PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, STATE DEPARTMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION, DURING THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF KENYA UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES CENTRAL PLACEMENT SERVICE 1ST NATIONAL CAREER CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION AT KICC, NAIROBI, ON 27TH JANUARY 2026.

- **Chairperson of the Board of the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service, Dr. Gituai**
- **Members of the Board of the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service;**
- **The Chief Executive Officer, KUCCPS, Dr Agnes Wahome**
- **Chairperson of the Vice Chancellors Committee Public Universities and Constituent Colleges, Prof. Daniel Mugendi;**
- **Distinguished Vice Chancellors and Principals; CEOs, Private Sector Leaders, Sponsors, Students, Parents, teaching Staff, Members of the Fourth Estate; and,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Good afternoon!

It is both a privilege and a historic honour for the Ministry of Education—and specifically the State Department for Higher Education—to officiate the First National Career Conference and

Exhibition convened by the Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Service.

This is not just another convening.

It is a national milestone.

For the first time since the establishment of KUCCPS, career guidance is being elevated from an auxiliary function to a national conversation, a recognition that how our young people choose careers determines their individual futures, and the economic destiny of this great country.

History teaches us that nations rise or fall not merely on the strength of their natural resources, but on the wisdom with which they deploy their human capital. From the Industrial Revolution to the Digital Age, societies that aligned education with economic reality surged ahead; those that did not were left behind.

One of the core statutory mandates of KUCCPS is the development and coordination of career guidance programmes. This conference is therefore not incidental—it is mission-critical. I commend the Board and Management of KUCCPS for the foresight, courage, and coordination required to bring this vision to life.

Today, we embrace career guidance as a vehicle for nurturing the dreams of our students.

Career guidance is not about telling students what to do.

It is about equipping them to decide wisely.

It is about transforming aspiration into strategy.

It is about ensuring that talent does not wander blindly but is channeled deliberately into sectors that build the economy from the bottom up—from artisans and technologists, to engineers, teachers, researchers, innovators, and entrepreneurs.

Allow me to anchor this discussion in a simple truth supported by data.

According to recent labour market analyses, employers simultaneously report persistent skills gaps, pointing to a paradox of jobs without graduates and at the same time graduates without jobs in certain fields.

This mismatch tells a story of misalignment of careers and jobs. It contributes to the crisis of youth unemployment. Government intervention through internship and kazi majuu.

In this regard, I commend KUCCPS for taking a positive contribution towards addressing this crisis. This brings me to the objectives of this inaugural National Career Conference and Exhibition, which are timely, strategic, and transformative:

- To provide a national platform for universities and colleges to showcase differentiated academic programmes, innovations, and pathways available to Kenya's youth;
- To convene career guidance teachers, scholars, policymakers, and industry leaders in an honest dialogue on matching education and training with current and future labour market needs;
- And to institutionalise this conference as an annual, one-stop national reference point for career guidance and advisory services.

The theme of this conference— “Informed Career Choices: A Skilled and Competitive Workforce”—could not be more relevant.

It speaks directly to the Government’s Bottom-up Economic Transformational Agenda, which recognises that sustainable growth is not built from boardrooms alone, but from the skills, productivity, and ingenuity of ordinary citizens.

A skilled workforce is not an abstract goal. It is the engine of manufacturing. It is the backbone of universal healthcare. It is the driver of food security. It is the foundation of innovation, exports, and competitiveness.

As the American economist Paul Krugman famously observed, “Productivity isn’t everything, but in the long run, it is almost everything.”

Productivity begins with the right skills, chosen early, nurtured deliberately, and applied purposefully.

This conference brings together 38 public and private universities and 24 TVET institutions, all showcasing programmes, innovations, and opportunities designed to meet Kenya’s development needs.

To the KCSE Class of 2025, I say this:

Your grades open doors—but your choices determine how far you walk through them.

Take advantage of this forum. Ask questions. Listen widely. Reflect deeply. Attend in person or follow the sessions online. The decision you make today will echo for decades.

Permit me a brief lesson from Aesop's fables.

In The Ant and the Grasshopper, the grasshopper sings through the summer, while the ant prepares quietly for winter. The lesson learnt is that when hardship comes, preparation—not talent alone—makes the difference.

Career guidance is society's way of helping our young people prepare before winter arrives. It is how we ensure that enthusiasm is matched with foresight, and ambition with realism.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen!

The State Department for Higher Education remains fully committed to supporting KUCCPS, universities, and colleges to strengthen career guidance, mentorship, and labour market responsiveness. We are working to ensure that higher education does not simply produce graduates, but produces graduates who are employable, adaptable, and globally competitive.

When education is aligned, economies grow.
When skills are relevant, productivity rises.
And when young people are guided well, nations prosper.

In conclusion, Ladies and Gentlemen!

I sincerely thank the universities and colleges that have responded to the call to participate in this landmark forum. I commend KUCCPS for organising this three-day national engagement, and I thank all participants for investing their time in shaping the future of Kenya's workforce. Your deliberations will bear lasting fruits for our country.

It is now my distinct pleasure and honour to declare the First National Career Conference and Exhibition officially open.

Thank you.