

Joshua S. Madumulla

Vice Chancellor, University of Iringa, Tanzania

Welcome Address

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to take this very rare opportunity to welcome you to the University of Iringa, to the District of Iringa, and to Iringa Region. Iringa is located in the Southern Highlands of Tanzania at an altitude of 3,000 to 5,000 ft above sea-level. It is a pleasant area, gifted with attractive landscapes, fauna and flora. The Iringa town overlooks a beautiful meandering Ruaha river and is a popular stopping point for visitors to the Ruaha National Park, where you come across the largest elephant herd in Africa, if not in the world. You have come to Iringa during the dry season and cold weather. This is our winter.

Allow me to give you a brief background of the University of Iringa. Its history goes back to 1994 when it started as a modest Theological College under the Lutheran Church of Tanzania, in the Diocese of Iringa, in the aegis of the Tumaini University – Iringa University College. It was the first private university in Tanzania. Gradually, it developed and expanded into six Faculties, namely Theology, Law, Arts and Social Sciences, Psychology, Science and Education, and Business and Economics. In 2013, it stopped being the Iringa University College of Tumaini. It was accredited as a full-fledged University, whose new name was the University of Iringa (UoI). We currently have slightly above 3,000 students and 180 staff.

You are here for the International Summer School that is being co-hosted by BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg of Germany and the University of Iringa. The main theme is **African Heritage and the Pillars of Sustainability**, under which there are various interesting topics for presentation and discussion. To my limited understanding, heritage includes the history, traditions, and qualities that a country or society has maintained and even nurtured across time and space, and they are considered an important part of its character and identity. Heritage makes a significant part of a country's or society's culture. It is a rich and complex concept that has attracted a number of academic approaches. It is my expectation, therefore, that a convention of this nature is going to create an opportunity for exchange of ideas and experiences of good practices and synergies.

The University of Iringa highly underscores the centrality of heritage to society, both in its cultural and natural forms. It is our strong feeling that there is need to sustain it. But what are the pillars of anchorage for sustainability? Such gatherings of assorted mental faculties are surely going to suggest possible answers. The University of Iringa has made some attempts in showing the way. We are not only running heritage programs in our curricula, but we have set up a project called *fahari yetu* (which literally means 'our pride') whose objective is to encourage, motivate, and instill interest and awareness in the understanding and conservation of the cultural heritage of Tanzania in particular, where Iringa is our entry point. We want Iringa to be the tourist door to the Southern Highlands of Tanzania (or

Southern Tanzania Corridor), while Arusha remains the door to the Northern Corridor. To that end, the University of Iringa, in collaboration with the Regional Commissioner's Office and a few stakeholders, through the financial support of the European Union, has established a museum and cultural centre (called Iringa Boma) as a significant heritage landmark which will attract not only local residents, but foreign residents as well. When properly run and maintained, the centre will make available a number of services:

1. It will serve as a conservation centre for cultural heritage materials of Iringa.
2. It will also serve as a showcase for cultural heritage materials and, in that way, act as a promoter of the said materials.
3. It will be a centre for tour information, where current news on what is offered in Iringa and in the Southern Highlands will be provided. For instance, there are Old Stone Age and historical sites to be mentioned. There are frogs of Kihansi that give birth, and not lay eggs, to be mentioned. I have already mentioned the great Ruaha game reserve that is proudly home to the biggest herd of elephants in Africa.
4. It will be an important reference point for students of different disciplines such as Tourism and Hospitality, Cultural Anthropology, Ethnology, Sociology, History, Language, and many others.
5. It will be a meeting centre for people who wish to relax over a cup of coffee, beverages and snacks. Don't forget about quality local foods.
6. There will be souvenirs in the form of cultural materials for visitors who have interest in such things.
7. The Boma structure, as it stands, is a reflection of imperial architecture of 19th Century Germany . That is also enrichment to knowledge.
8. The Boma will work closely with the National Museum of Tanzania in order to attract national and global attention and tell them '**The Iringa people are proactively there!**'.

Last but not least, let this rare gathering be room for a hundred flowers to blossom, and a hundred schools of thought to contend. Let me also thank you in advance that you, ladies and gentlemen, will be our ambassadors of the Boma Museum, of the Iringa Region and the Southern Corridor of Tanzania to the world. Do not forget to give yourselves time to visit the few cultural and natural heritage attractions we have in Iringa. You are in very good and safe hands with the *fahari yetu* team.

Once more, from the deepest of my heart, let me thank our colleagues and co-hosts from BTU-Cottbus, Germany, for being so kind to allow this event to take place thousands of kilometers away from their home.

I thank all the participants who have covered long distances to come and attend this event. Remain blessed. I wish you a very healthy, consummate and successful International Summer School. Thank you.

Joshua Madumulla