

**Speech by Professor Joseph Semboja
Executive Director of REPOA**

**On the Occasion of REPOA's 13th Annual Research Workshop
2April, 2008 at Dar es Salaam**

*Professor Esther Mwaikambo, Chairperson of the REPOA Board of Directors,
Hon. Dr Cyril Chami, Deputy Minister of Industry, Trade and Marketing, for the current
occasion also representing Minister Mkulo,
Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and Heads of Diplomatic Missions (I recognize
Ambassadors Karel van Kesteren, from the Netherlands Embassy; Anne Barrington,
from the Embassy of Ireland; Bjarne Sørensen from the Royal Danish Embassy,
Professor Benno Ndulu, Governor of the Bank of Tanzania,
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen*

Let me start by thanking the Guest of Honour for accepting to join us this morning at the official opening of the REPOA's 13th Annual Research Workshop. We are aware that your presence here conflicts with another very important meeting. Your decision to be with us this morning is a clear testimony of your commitment to the promotion of research and policy dialogue in the country. The research community appreciates the support and recognition it gets, from our Government, as a partner in policy development.

Madam Chairperson, the objectives of the REPOA Annual Research Workshops have not changed. The first is to build research capacity of Tanzanians; the second is to promote informed policy dialogue, using the results of the research commissioned and managed by REPOA and other organizations; (this objective also helps to disseminate information from these researches) and; the third is to facilitate networking among the various stakeholders and individuals.

Our workshops have performed very well. However, as is the case with all good things, they must be maintained and adjusted to remain attractive, productive and relevant. In the last two years participants of our workshops have raised two concerns and called for changes in the content and management of the workshops in these areas. The first concern was the lack of the 'big picture' in the analyses, presentations and discussions and the second concern was the poor quality of some reports. In the latter, the concern was that too much time was being spent on issues that could have been addressed by the researchers; the feeling was that workshop participants should focus more on substantive issues.

Madam Chairperson, in this year's workshop we have addressed both these concerns. In the past the presentations at our workshops have predominantly related to research projects undertaken by recipients of REPOA research grants. This has meant that the discussions by participants tended to focus on case studies and micro issues since many of the studies were undertaken in isolation, and often out of context with the national and global discussions on development issues. We looked at pieces of a jigsaw, rather than how the jigsaw pieces fitted together to give the complete picture.

The proposed change is calling for the whole picture, also called the 'big picture', if we are to make a serious and valuable contribution to the promotion of growth and the reduction of poverty in the country. Unless we look at the 'big picture' we will not be able to understand the apparent contradictions that sometimes emerge in research, and we will not have full comprehension of issues of development.

It is time that we challenge ourselves to do more. We must take the time during this workshop to think through the theoretical implications of the work being discussed. We must look at issues within the context of development dialogue at the global level. We need to question existing theory, we need to strengthen theoretical frameworks, we need to position these individual studies, which will be discussed during the course of this workshop, within the context of the 'bigger picture'.

Madam Chairperson, we shall initiate this discussion this morning with a theme on growth and development. I hope that the presentations by Professors Ndulu, Wangwe and Shivji will stimulate thought and dialogue. I ask that as the workshop proceeds to the individual studies later today, you seek to draw information from the research results to make a contribution to dialogue on national and global developmental issues.

I hope that you will find this new format stimulating. If this new approach is judged to be successful, I would propose that we explore a new theme for each workshop.

Madam Chairperson, there is a second change to the format for this workshop; fewer papers will be presented. To answer the call for quality papers and presentations we have scrutinized the papers before the workshop to ensure that they are worthy of substantive discussion. All researchers will still have the opportunity for technical feedback; this will be provided in a more private setting in the closed third day of the workshop. This means that we are able to allocate a larger amount of time for each researcher to present their project and receive feedback. I believe that this change provides for better capacity building. In addition, the presentations and discussions today and tomorrow should provide for more focused and sharper dialogue.

During the closing plenary session tomorrow we look forward to receiving your feedback on these changes to the programme. I hope that you will find that these changes are an improvement, and that they have encouraged you to make a greater intellectual contribution to this event.

I now hand over to Professor Esther Mwaikambo, the Chairperson of REPOA's Board of Directors to continue with the programme.

I thank your attention