

SPEECH BY HONOURABLE MIZENGO P. PINDA (MP), PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA AT THE OPENING OF 14th ANNUAL RESEARCH WORKSHOP ORGANISED BY REPOA AT WHITE SANDS HOTEL, DAR ES SALAAM, 1 APRIL 2009

Prof. Esther Mwaikambo, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA);

Mr. Abbas Kandoro, Dar es Salaam Regional Commissioner;

Prof. Joseph Semboja, the Executive Director of REPOA;

Excellencies Ambassador's and Members of the Diplomatic Corps Present;

Dr. Tandika Mkandawire, Director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development;

Distinguished Participants;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

At the outset, I would like to extend recognition and appreciation to the Board and the Management of Research on Poverty Alleviation (REPOA) for organizing and inviting me to officiate the **14th Annual Research Workshop, on the Role of State in Market Led Development**. In the same vein, and on behalf of the Government and the People of Tanzania, I graciously welcome all participants to Tanzania. I am informed that, the event am about to officiate, brings together Researchers, Experts and Research Users from within and outside Tanzania. I particularly salute all those who have travelled from outside Tanzania to attend this important Workshop. We hope that, apart from sharing knowledge and research findings with us, you will enjoy the beauty and hospitality of Tanzanians. **Kwa Kiswahili tunasema Karibuni na Mjisikie Mko Nyumbani**, meaning Welcome and feel at home.

**Theme of the Workshop
Distinguished Participants,**

The discussions on the theme "**the Role of State in Market- Led Development**" is timely and topical as the World is passing through the moment of Financial Crisis and Economic Recession. We are witnessing the Governments in Developed World sleeplessly finding ways to bail out Private Companies from collapsing. As we meet here today, the G-20 led by the G-8 most Industrialised Countries are Meeting in London to discuss, among other issues, the Global Financial Crisis.

The current Global Financial Crisis, has reminded us that, States have big roles in making the market function properly. It has reminded us that, when the market forces: demand and supply are left to operate uncontrolled, they can seriously misbehave and the consequences are always unbearable. We all see, read and hear how the Financial Crisis has affected both big and small economies. The premise that when there is a Global Economic Crisis, Poor Countries are the only ones that are affected does not hold water any more. The economies of different Countries are now interdependent and thus the World Economy is interlocked. This is contrary to what it used to be believed that, "**When the U.S. sneezes the World catches cold!!**". The opposite is equally true today.

Our prosperity is linked inextricably to the maintenance of a strong World Economy, an open international trading system, and stable Global Financial Markets.

Madam Chair, and Distinguished Participants;

The role of State in the Economy has been a matter of great concern among Scholars and Experts of different fields be it development, finance, or economy. Different schools of thought have emerged, some arguing that States have been playing excessive roles in the Market Economy, while others are arguing that States have been playing low profiles in the Market Economy. A comprehensive appreciation of this role is crucial as we move forward to the next Stage of our Nation's Development, especially the next phase of the implementation of the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty, commonly known as MKUKUTA in its Kiswahili acronym. This meeting is therefore, an important venue for Local and International Experts to share their knowledge and experiences and give valuable inputs at this initial stage of discussion on the next phase of MKUKUTA. I believe this Workshop will explore substantially, and with evidence from your Research Findings how have we been fairing in terms of providing conducive environment for the market to function properly and efficiently in our Country.

Madam Chair, and Distinguished Participants;

Let me share with you some of my thoughts on the role of the State in a Market Led Economy. But before doing this, allow me to site a Quote by Morris Berman on inequality, technology, future, Market Economy, and United States that says and I quote **"there are two (inter alia) ways of ruining a society – namely, letting the market 'be the sole director of the fate of Human beings and allowing technology to permeate every aspect of our lives. In the United States, both of these developments have converged, creating a huge chasm between rich and poor and pushing us over the edge into a kind of antisociety. ... While these developments have been widely hailed as the dawn of a golden age, the likelihood is that, they actually amount to a death knell, the beginning of the end of the American empire"** end of quote. I throw this quote to you experts to analyse it and in the course of your discussions to come with a conclusion whether its true or not.

Background of the Role of State

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen;

The Role of the State is a dynamic process. It is directly linked to social traditions, economic changes and technological innovations. What people want and expect from Government is constantly evolving. The role and scope of the State therefore, has always evolved to respond to these changing social and economic pressures.

Historically, the role of the State greatly expanded immediately after the Second World War to rebuild industry and guarantee minimum standards of living for all citizens. This was the time the Russian Revolution created a new role for the State under the ideological thesis of Scientific Socialism, Democratic Centralism and Centrally Planned Economies. This was contrary to Democratic Liberalism, Freedom of the Press, Free and Fair Elections and Free Market Economic System.

The struggle between these two roles began in earnest after the World War II and lasted for over 40 years that was from 1950 to 1991 when Communism collapsed and the USSR began to disintegrate in early 1992. It is worth noting that, most of the States in the so-called Third World which emerged during the 1950s and 1970s, had adopted the Russian style in various degrees, particularly the One-Party System and Centrally Planned Economy.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen;

At the advent of the 21st Century, the role of the State was increasingly and steadily becoming almost universal. The socio-economic goals have been dominated by Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization and Freely Floating National Currencies. The Political Role of the State is now dominated by Democratization, Free and Fair Elections, Good Governance and the Protection of Human Rights. However, in recent decades, the role of the State has changed again as better educated and more prosperous Citizens with higher expectations want more responsive and personalised services. This has led to the State moving from providing services itself to commissioning, regulating and guaranteeing them. These trends, and the changes they spark, seem certain to continue in the coming years.

Madame Chair,

In today's World, the Universal Role of the State can be summarized as follows:

- Maintaining law and order by fostering the rule of law and individual as well as collective security of its citizens;
- Enhancing Good Governance, Democracy or Democratization and Popular Participation in Free and Fair Elections;
- Adopting a stable economic policy, freeing the economy from distortions and combating corruption;
- Maintaining an Independent Judicial System;
- Judicious use of National Wealth with special attention to disadvantaged groups in Society;
- Directing State resources to investment in social services (health, education and social welfare) and infrastructure projects;
- Protection of environment; and
- Protection of Human Rights.

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen;

This background postulates that, the role of the State can only be discussed within the context of the other key stakeholders in National Development, namely, the Government, the Private Sector or Business Community and the Civil Society. Each of these stakeholders bring strengths and opportunities that when fully utilized can lead to higher levels of socio economic advancements. Complementarities of activities and exploitation of synergies provide an added dimension to the momentum for accelerated economic growth and development. While the immediate agendas of the three Partners may seem different, the overall goal and results of their actions is a higher level of growth and welfare for the Country. It is clear that these players need each other. This explains why the Government of Tanzania forcefully embarked on, and tirelessly working to promoting the Development of the Private Sector and Civil Society since the mid 1990s.

Responsibilities of the State

Madam Chair, and Distinguished Participants;

In my view, the responsibilities of the State can be grouped into two broad areas:

First, there are those roles that all States must perform, regardless of ideological inclination, or the strengths of various stakeholders. These roles include:

- Socio-Economic Policy development and creation of an enabling environment for growth and development; and
- Social protection of the disadvantaged groups.

Second, there are those roles or responsibilities that can be shared amongst the three Stakeholders, namely: the Government, the Private Sector or Business Community and the Civil Society.

Madam Chair,

Starting with the **first role**, it is a fact that Development of Policy and direction of the Strategy for Growth and Development, and the clear communication of that Strategy is the key role of the State in a Market Led Economy. In the absence of a clear and feasible strategic direction, the dynamics of the National Economy would be determined outside the National boundaries, which would be unhealthy. A well defined National Strategy offers predictability of the Nation's direction, and thus facilitating decision making by the Private Sector.

Given that resources are limited, only selected and focused number of interventions that show strong synergies towards accelerating growth and development should be chosen. The strategic choice of actions with underlying policies, provide a sound reference for the Private Sector and bring Non-Governmental Stakeholders behind the growth effort. Once a viable Strategy has been agreed then, it is the responsibility of Government to oversee implementation. In addition, recognizing that unforeseen changes may occur during implementation, it is the responsibility of Government to incorporate feasible adjustments/intervenes to ensure continuing implementation.

Madam Chair,

The Government of Tanzania since 1999 has articulated its overall Long Term Goal and Policy Direction, after the adoption of the Tanzania Development Vision 2025. Preparation of the Vision started in 1996 after fifteen (15) years of implementing Economic Structural Adjustment and Recovery Programmes. The Tanzania Development Vision 2025 which was formulated through a wide participatory approach, is expected to be an important pillar in building National Unity and cohesion needed to ensure economic development in an environment of Peace, Security and Patriotism. Therefore, the main attributes of the Vision 2025, include High and Shared Growth; High Quality Livelihood; Peace, Stability and Unity; Good Governance; High Quality Education; and International Competitiveness.

During the adoption of the Vision in May 1999, the Government decided that it will be implemented in a continuous phase of **three year Medium Term Plans**, which basically emphasize the need to enable the growth of the economy and the fight against poverty. Hence, in 2000, Tanzania prepared and started the implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategy. After its successful implementation, it was followed by the Second Phase Plan entitled the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (MKUKUTA) adopted since 2005.

Progress in the Implementation of Poverty Reduction Strategies

Madam Chair, and Distinguished Participants;

The Socio-Economic Reforms undertaken to date, have enabled Tanzania to make significant progress in Macroeconomic Indicators. However, poverty is still a major problem facing many People, particularly those living in Rural Areas. The Household Budget Survey conducted in 2007

revealed that, in the last six years, Income Poverty has slightly declined from the level of 35.7 percent in 2001/2002 to 33.5 percent in 2007, a decline of only 2.2 percent. The National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Reduction envisioned halving the proportion of people living below the National Poverty Line to 24 percent by 2010. The real situation as shown by the above statistics indicate that the prevalence of Income Poverty is still very high in Tanzania. Therefore, to attain this target Tanzania will require a sustained and fast economic growth rate.

Macroeconomic Policy Environment

Madam Chair,

Since 1990s, remarkable progress has been made in improving the Country's macroeconomic environment that is necessary for a successful Private Sector Led Economy. The Country's Real Economic Growth (GDP) increased from a low level of 4.2 percent in 1995 to 7.1 percent in 2007. Domestic Revenue Collection have improved significantly from an average monthly collection of Shillings 25 billion in 1995 to Shillings 55 Billion in 2000; and up to the tune of Shillings 350 Billion per month last year.

Inflation rates which had remained in single digit for the past nine years, in August 2008 rose to 11.6 percent and further to 13.3 percent in February 2009. The increase in inflation was mainly due to intense pressure emanating from a protracted surge in oil and food prices. Achievements in Economic Reforms have also facilitated the growth of external trade and thus increase in Official Foreign Exchange Reserves, sufficient to cover 5 months of imports of goods and services. These achievements attained so far have caused a strong and stable resilient economy, which is necessary for sustainable growth. Although currently the global economic outlook remains bleak in the wake of Global Financial Crisis, our key challenge ahead is a speedy return to low inflation level and attaining a high growth rate of 8.1 percent in 2009.

SECTORAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

Agriculture Sector

Madam Chair,

Agriculture occupies a key position in the Tanzanian economy because of its contribution to the overall economic growth through supplies of food, raw materials and exports. It is a source of livelihood for the majority of the population, providing employment for about 80 percent of economically active population. As a result of various efforts by the Government and various Stakeholders, Agriculture has registered a growth rate of an average of about 4 percent between 2000 and 2007.

This performance falls short of the required Agricultural Sector Growth for Reduction of Poverty which should be above 10 percent. Some of the challenges facing Agricultural Sector in Tanzania are of our own making while others are external factors exacerbated by unpredictable weather condition. The main constraints which hinder Agriculture performance improvement to the Farmer include:

- Inadequate access to and/or delayed delivery of inputs;
- Lack of timely advice as a result of inadequate access to Extension Services and Poor Transfer of Knowledge from Researchers to Farmers;

- Use of obsolete technology relying on hand-hoe for the majority Small Holder Farmers;
- Lack of irrigation, thus subjecting Agriculture to the whims of nature;
- Poor infrastructure, especially roads;
- Lack of comprehensive market information; and
- Inadequate credit for Agricultural Production and Marketing.

The Government has continued to address all of these challenges to different degrees in collaboration with various Stakeholders. May I point out that the Government todate has adopted a comprehensive Programme which envisage to bring about changes in the Agricultural Sector. This is the Agricultural Sector Development Program (ASDP) whose implementation has the potential to improve Agriculture, to turn around the Economy and the plight of the majority of our people.

The Program aims at bringing about Modernization of the Agricultural Sector through increased use of fertilizers, high yielding varieties of seeds, enhancement of extension services of new technology to farmers, improve research, increase use of land under irrigation and provision of effective and efficient rural infrastructure (i.e. roads, markets and storage facilities);

Currently, the Government is pursuing measures to gradually eliminate the hand-hoe through encouraging individual and groups of Farmers to procure small Tractors and Power Tillers. To realize this, the Government is mobilizing resources to ensure availability of Power Tillers to the Farmers. We also understand that, these efforts need to be complemented by services such as the provision of all weather roads so as to help Farmers to timely transport inputs and farm products to market places. It is my view that, in the envisaged Third Phase of the National Strategy for Growth and Poverty Alleviation, the Government will upscale its role in the Agriculture Sector in order to transform the Sector rapidly and enable it contribute substantially to economic growth.

Infrastructure Development

Madam Chair,

Provision of Infrastructure is one of the major role of the State that creates conducive environment for Economic Growth in various Sectors of the Economy. Taking an example of the roads sub-sector, it is one of the central Sectors necessary for the sustainability of the Country's Economic Development and Reduction of Poverty. Road Transport accommodates more than 70 percent of internal freight traffic and more than 64 percent of transit cargo to six neighbouring Landlocked Developing Countries. Besides, it is the major mode of passenger transport. These facts have compelled the Government through its various plans to accord the highest priority to investment in roads construction and maintenance. In the last decade, between year 2000 and 2008, out of about 10,000 Kilometres of Trunk Roads in the Country, only about 4,000 were paved by the year 2000. However, by 2008, we have managed to add 1,500 Kilometres of paved trunk roads and many other road construction projects are ongoing.

The other 56,625 Kilometers of roads network under the responsibility of Local Government Authorities are being addressed through Local Government Transport Program which has just started. The Program will ensure that basic access is established on at least 90 percent of the whole Local Government Transport Infrastructure by 2012. This is an area where the Government has a major role to play in order to create conducive environment for all Sectors of the Economy to grow and flourish. However, we are also encouraging the Private Sector to participate.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen;

A vital role of the State in a Market Economy is to intervene where there are market failures in the provisions of basic Social and Economic Services, such as education, health, rural water supply, key infrastructure and maintenance of law and order. Allow me briefly to elaborate some achievements in these Sectors.

Education Sector

The Universal Primary Education (UPE) is an area which was accorded the highest priority after Independence in 1961. To-date, enrolment rate has reached 97 percent. With these results, it means that we are on track to achieving the Second Millennium Development Goal regarding enrolment in Primary Education for both Boys and Girls alike. The Government through the Education Sector Development Program (ESDP) is consolidating and sustaining those gains. This is by improving quality of education through recruiting more teachers, optimizing effective use of available resources, reinforcing capacity to manage schools, addressing gender disparity in schools and improving upon transition rate from Primary Schools to Secondary School Levels. The Government has recognized that, with an increasing Technological Innovation and the wave of Globalization, Tanzanians require at least a Secondary School Education level in order to cope with the current development challenges. To address this challenge, the Government is implementing a Medium Term Plan (2005-2010) which requires Local Government Authorities to establish a Secondary School in every Ward under participatory approach.

Distinguished Participants,

Remarkable progress has been attained during the implementation of this Program. For-example, the Enrolment Rate at Secondary Schools (Form One to Six) has increased by 254 percent from a total of **432,599** Students in 2004 to **1.2 million** Students in 2008. Similarly, the number of Secondary Schools built has increased by 194 percent from **1,291** in 2004 to **3,798** in 2008. However, such successful stories are always coupled with daunting challenges. **Firstly**, we have not been able to provide Laboratories for Science Subjects to every School. **Secondly**, we are facing shortage of Teachers especially on Science subjects. However, these problems are being addressed gradually by building more laboratories and training more Teachers.

The increase in number of Secondary School Leavers has also led to increased number of Students who qualify for admission into Higher Learning Institutions. The number of both Public and Private Universities in Tanzania has increased from **17** in 2003 to **32** in 2008. Similarly, the number of Students enrolled in these Universities has increased from **23,213** in 2003 to **82,428** in 2008. Despite the increase of Universities and Students Enrolment, still the number of Students enrolled into these Universities does not exceed 50 percent of qualifying candidates. **Lack of placement of the remaining 50 percent of qualifying candidates is a challenge.**

To deal with this problem, the Government started Building the University of Dodoma (UDOM), designed to enroll about 40,000 students once completed. Todate, the University though still under construction has already enrolled 7,000 students. It is my view that, education is one area where the Government has done very well although as mentioned earlier on, we are still facing some challenges especially shortage of teachers, laboratories, libraries and gender balance especially at Higher Learning Institutions. The Government is addressing these challenges in order to improve the quality of Education in the Country.

**Health Sector
Distinguished Delegates,**

On the Health Sector, the Government has fulfilled its role in providing health care to its people by ensuring that essential drugs are available in Health Centres and Health Education is provided as an important preventive measure on various diseases. We are also implementing a comprehensive Health Program which will ensure that every Village in the Country has a Dispensary and every Ward has a Health Centre. This goes hand in hand with the development of manpower in Health Sector which will provide services using available facilities. There is also a Universal Agreement of the duty of the State to ensure that social protection of the disadvantage groups are enhanced; hence the Social Protection Framework is currently under preparation in order to ensure that social protection in our Country becomes part of human resource development. These are only few examples to show the Role of the State in ensuring the availability of Health Services and Facilities in the Market Led Economy.

**People with Disability, Orphans and Poor Families
Distinguished Participants,**

Many Low and Middle Income Countries are moving towards integrated National Systems of Social Welfare which guarantee the basic living standards of the most disadvantage groups. Countries in Africa and Tanzania in particular, are also adopting Social Policy Frameworks and Institutions to the challenge of poverty, disadvantage groups such as People with Disabilities, Orphans and Poor Families. The Government therefore, has the responsibility to serve People with Disability, Children and those from Poor Families. For example, on Health, all of these people need to access health services and facilities. On Education, they all have the right to get Education, and in fact, they have the ability to receive Education from the same facilities as others in the community.

Regarding employment, People with Disabilities, Orphans and those coming from the Poor Families have the right to decent work and are capable to secure employment in both Public and Private Sectors. It is therefore, the role of State to ensure that, the mentioned special groups of people have equal rights in Economic, Social and Political Fields.

On Disadvantaged Groups, the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty (MKUKUTA) clearly states the following:

- One:** increased number of Orphans and Vulnerable Children reached with Social Protection Measure by 2010.
- Two:** 20 percent of Children and Adults with Disabilities reached with effective Social protection measures by 2010.
- Three:** Increased support to poor households and communities to care for Vulnerable Groups targeting Older People Orphans and other vulnerable Children.

Madam Chair, and Distinguished Participants,

Let me now elaborate on the **second category of the role of the State.**

From the mid 1980s, Tanzania decided to move away from a State Controlled Economy to Market Led Development. The Government defined its role of enhancement of Law and Order, Policy Development, the Creation of an Enabling Environment for the Private Sector to flourish putting in place appropriate Regulatory Systems and Enforcement Mechanisms.

Since 1997, a reviewed Private Sector Promotion and Regulatory Framework had been put in place in which special incentives have been adopted and mechanism for protecting investments created. The Government has established the Tanzania Investment Centre (TIC), which offers various

incentive packages to investors and operates as "One Stop Centre" for all investors (Local and Foreign) in order to expedite investment facilitation services.

The Government has also created various mechanisms for strengthening Public-Private Sector Partnerships (PPPs) in which dialogue is being held with the Private Sector through fora such as Investors' Round Table, Smart Partnerships and Chief Executive Officer's (CEO) meetings. These fora have created a very cordial relationship between the Government and the Business Community. This is a clear testimony that the Government is determined and committed to promoting and strengthening the Private Sector so as ensure better life for all Tanzanians. All our Development Partners, Multilateral Institutions, including the Bretton Woods Institutions and the Business Community operating in Tanzania, appreciate our efforts and support our policies and more importantly they trust us.

For the past ten years, there has been a steady increase in Foreign Direct Investments (FDI) in the economy. FDI increased from USD 150.86 in 1996 to USD 512.5 in 2007. Such an increase is a result of the role of the State to create conducive environment for investments as well as improved macroeconomic performance. We have opened doors for Private Sector participation in providing goods and services to the People especially in the productive and economic sectors of the economy (Mining, Finance, Communication, Agriculture, Energy, Transport, Natural Resources and Tourism), as well as in the Social Services Sector (Education, Water and Health). It is worth noting that, currently, most of the Non-Government Organizations and Civil Society Organizations especially Religious Institutions are heavily involved in the provision of Social Services.

We are also encouraging the concept of partnerships between the Private Sector and the Public Sector in the Economy of which it ensures that the best services for our people are available at affordable costs. We want our people, especially the poor to access better services and more importantly to improve their standards of living. The role of the State here is to support the Public Private Sector Partnership which has demonstrated viable capability to the implementation of innovative practices among Tanzanian Business Community.

There is a discussion regarding the role of the State in Education for Human Resource Development. It is generally accepted that the State should provide the Universal Basic Education, as this level offers greater social benefits and there are limited benefits to the individuals. However, there is less agreement about the role of the State at Higher Levels of Education, since greater personal benefits accrue, especially at Tertiary Levels. I believe that, State involvement will continue to be necessary to ensure that there is an adequate human resource in place, **as the incomes of the majority of the population are too low to afford Tertiary Education.**

There have been complaints about State interference regarding what to produce, where to sell and at what price, especially regarding Agricultural Commodities. I contend that proactive intervention by the State is necessary where the infrastructure is weak and the Private Sector is not fully developed. This especially applies where there is no effective Competitive Market, and lack of appropriate Regulatory Systems and Enforcement Mechanisms. **The nature and extent of that intervention however is an important matter for discussion, and I believe that further refinements are needed.**

Consumer Protection Distinguished Participants; Ladies and Gentlemen;

Last but not least, let me now consider the issue of Consumer Protection. Although this can be seen as a Human Rights issue, there is also an aspect of raising and setting standards for quality and supporting capacity building. This is an important aspect of regulation and enforcement, and

we must not forget the potential impact beyond our National borders. The aspect of protectionism as an instrument for growth and development is important. While creating an enabling environment could help support business generally, it may not be sufficient to proactively support a strategically defined agenda for Growth and Development. Therefore, a discussion on the Role of the State in supporting strategic activities and investments in business is in my view, warranted.

**Conclusion
Distinguished Participants,**

I have raised some issue which I believe this Workshop will provide sound and balanced inputs which will lead to informed discussions and Policy Development. I believe that, your discussions in the next two days will make a valuable contribution to the development of strategic focus on Growth and Poverty Reduction of our Nation. I therefore urge that, the findings of research that you will share here should reach the public. We are researching for the Society and we are using Society to collect research data. The Society have the right to get the feedback of research findings. If we don't return to them or device mechanisms of giving them feedback, we will be falling into a trap of resentment from some segments of Society who might feel that they are over-researched and no feedback is given to them. **Let us share the findings with the people!**

Distinguished Participants,

Before concluding my speech, allow me on behalf of the Government of Tanzania to applaud our Development Partners for their continued support. The Government of the United Republic of Tanzania appreciates their contribution on Research and Development. Recently, His Excellency, President Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete underscored the need to invest in Research and Development. He has therefore, pledged and committed one percent (1%) of the Country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to Research and Development from the current allocation of 0.3 percent. Research plays a pivotal role in our Nation's Development. REPOA has consistently shown that it is possible to share research findings and to inject the same into decision making avenues. I strongly believe that, Market Led Economies need the support of the State. The question is to what extent! I Therefore wish this Workshop fruitful discussions and look forward to reading final recommendations and report.

Madam Chair, Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

With these remarks, it is now my honour and privilege to declare REPOA's 14th Annual Research Workshop officially open.

Thank you for your attention.