

University of Nairobi community celebrate International Mother-Tongue Day.

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The University of Nairobi community composed of staff and students celebrated the International Mother-tongue Day today February 21, 2018 at the Education Building, Main Campus.

Speaking during the event, the University of Nairobi Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbithi observed that language is a God-given heritage that we need to embrace. International Mother Tongue Day was established by UNESCO in 1999 to promote all indigenous languages of member countries. It was also to help in promoting cultural diversity. "Language is the most powerful tool for promoting cultural identity," he said.

The Vice-Chancellor, who was represented by the Principal, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Prof. Enos Njeru, opined that appreciation of other people's diversity helps in promoting peace and tolerance. He noted that the government has been at the forefront in promoting indigenous languages as was enshrined in the constitution. The government continues to create space to nurture languages by allowing the broadcast media to air their programmes in local languages. These local media stations have indeed created jobs, helped in shaping nations identities and created avenues for interactions.

He thanked the various organizations which have been at the forefront in promoting the use of local languages, such organizations include: Bible Translations and Language Development among others.

To enhance language development the University of Nairobi has established the Department of Linguistics and Languages at the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Among the languages taught at the department include Arabic, Kiswahili, German, French and Chinese.

Prof. Kithaka wa Mberia, opined that language plays a key role in culture preservation and encouraged those in attendance to celebrate their mother tongue as no language is inferior to

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another. According to him, language plays a key role in promoting music, art, film, poetry, restoring self-confidence and productivity. Language also aids in adult literacy, conflict resolution at the grass roots, it helps citizens participate in democracy and governance. In his concluding remarks, Prof. Mberia noted that mother-tongue is key in wealth generation as most business deals are conducted in mother-tongue.

Also present during the event were: Associate Dean, Faculty of Arts, Prof. Ephraim Wahome and Prof. Jane Mutiga, Director, Center for Translation and Interpretation and Dr. Jane Oduor, Chair, Department of Linguistics and Literature.

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