



SPEECH BY THE INSPECTOR GENERAL, NATIONAL POLICE SERVICE, MR. DOUGLAS KANJA KIROCHO, CBS, OGW, DURING MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCACY EVENT AND LAUNCH OF THE PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TRAINING PROGRAM AT THE AFRICA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY ON WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2024.

- The PS Interior Dr. Raymond Omollo
- Chairman National Police Service Commission Mr. Kinuthia Mbugua
- The Vice Chancellor African International University- Rev. Dr. Nelson Makanda
- Developments Partners here present
- Senior Police Officers present
- Faculty
- Students
- Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

I feel very honored to join you here at Africa International University-Kenya for the mental health advocacy event and launch of the Africa International University Psychosocial Support Training Program.

As you have heard, my name is Douglas Kanja, the Inspector General National Police Service, and with me are senior Police Officers including Deputy Inspector General Kenya Police Service-Mr. Eliud Lagat, Mr. Gilbert Masengeli-the Deputy Inspector General Administration Police Service and the DCI Mr. Mohamed Amin.

Our gathering here today underscores our concerted collaborative efforts to address mental illness.

I wish therefore to take this early opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Disability Mainstreaming Foundation of Kenya (DMF-Kenya) for convening this important conference on mental health, and the Africa International University for hosting us.

From my perspective and experience as a police officer and practitioner, police work is a very noble career because you get to serve and protect humanity. However, the nature of policework as shown by research globally, is also very demanding and stressful.

While all people are vulnerable to some level of mental illness, the vulnerability of police officers to mental illness is escalated by unique factors. For instance, Police Officers are

constantly handling traumatic and disturbing scenes of crime and accidents that often leave them with long-term mental and psychological trauma.

Consequently, Police Officers worldwide tend to commit suicides more than the general public. On the same note, depression affects all people regardless of age or social status, but police Officers report higher levels of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder than the general population.

Relatedly, we are now seeing an increasing trend among the youth and children engaging in substance use and drug abuse, yet Officers have not been spared either despite being the law enforcers. From consumption of illicit brews to

abuse of drugs i.e. bhang, heroin and other substances contributing significantly to mental illness and criminal behavior.

Unfortunately, most law enforcement officers shy away from seeking mental health assistance which delays possible interventions in their situations. Due to these realities and the prevalent challenges, mental health remains a pertinent issue in our country, and of particular concern to the National Police Service.

To deal with mental illness, the National Police Service has been undertaking deliberate measures by adopting a multi-pronged approach. That is why today's conference is significant to us as a Service because it provides that much

needed platform where we can share ideas and information on mental health.

We have established the Directorate of Chaplaincy and Counseling to spearhead and coordinate professional counselling and psychosocial support for Officers. Through partnership with medical institutions and provision of medical cover, Officers are also able to access psychosocial support but much more is required.

My agenda as Inspector General is currently focused on transforming our police stations into centers of excellence for service delivery to the public. That calls for training of Officers to standardize their service and enhance professionalism. With proper training, Kenyans should be

able to access services at police stations regardless of their social status.

However, apart from training, addressing mental wellbeing of officers plays a central role in the transformation of police stations into centers of excellence, we need mentally stable Officers to serve and protect members of public.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

This transformative task however cannot be left to the Police alone, amidst limited resources such as trained professionals and infrastructure. We need partnerships with everybody, from members of the community to development partners, from academic institutions to hospitals and many other experts.

The launch of this collaboration in mental health and well-being training between NPS and Africa International University is important because it is aimed at enhancing our efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery to the public.

Today's conference therefore is a good opportunity for all of us to highlight the urgent need for attention to mental health issues and encourage evidence-based research to inform our policies on mental health, particularly for Police Officers. As NPS, we look forward to the execution of the Disability Mainstreaming Foundation of-Kenya planned series of trainings on mental health.

As I come to the close of my remarks, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, let us not forget that stigmatization that comes with mental illness is still a hurdle that all of us should strive to overcome as a Nation.

This calls for continuously creating awareness about mental health and mental illness among the members of public and most importantly, police officers.

Each one of us has a duty to challenge misconceptions, stereotypes and negative perceptions surrounding mental health in order to create an environment where individuals feel comfortable to seek help and support without fear of discrimination.

Consequently, our intention through this partnership is to undertake a comprehensive awareness training in mental health and psychosocial support within the NPS through the support of DMF-Kenya. I wish therefore to reaffirm our commitment to work together.

Once again, I thank you all.

God Bless.

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PRESIDENT OF AFRIPOL GENERAL ASSEMBLY