SPEECH BY MR. JOSEPH K. KOSKEY DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY OF PAN-AFRICAN QUALITY INFRASTRUCTURE STAKEHOLDER MEETING ON 5^{TH} APRIL 2011 AT RED COURT HOTEL, NAIROBI AT 10.00 AM

The ARSO President, Dr. Kioko Mang'eli,
The AFRIMETS Chairman Mr. Wynand Louw,
The NEPAD Representative Mr. Walter Okoko,
AFSEC Executive Secretary Mr. Paul Johnson,
SANAS CEO, Mr. Ron Josias Representing AFRAC
PTB Representative, Madame Kathrin Wunderlich,
ARSO Secretary General Mr. Andrew Maiyo
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,
All Protocols Observed:

I am profoundly touched by the great distinction and honour accorded me this morning by this assembly in these lovely surroundings to open this stakeholder meeting aimed at discussing support of a Pan-African Quality Infrastructure.

Our Mission today is simple: to redefine the direction of the Quality Infrastructure in Africa and set the pace for its re-alignment to the global realities for the benefit of Africa. While doing this, we need to look back briefly and reflect on the achievements so far attained and the challenges that may have made us miss the mark so that we can drive forward with speed and meet the goals that our forefathers envisaged.

When I talk about looking back I do not mean that we let our eyes linger too much on the rear view mirror for we may miss the road but the reflection that I am thinking about and looking for, is the vision that our forefathers talked about during the attainment of our respective freedoms and independence.

In 1961, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah noted that Africa was a continent of contradictions; a paradox of poverty in the midst of plenty and scarcity in the midst of abundance. In his book titled *I speak of Freedom* he states and I quote:

"Never before have a people had within their grasp so great an opportunity for developing a continent endowed with so much wealth. Individually, the independent states of Africa, some of them potentially rich, others poor, can do little for their people. Together, by mutual help, they can achieve much. But the economic development of the continent must be planned and pursued as a whole. A loose confederation designed only for economic co-operation would not provide the necessary unity of purpose. Only a strong political union can bring about full and effective development of our natural resources for the benefit of our people"

Fast forward to the year 2011 and there is indeed some change in that the whole of Africa is independent from colonialism and some countries have attained some level of economic freedom, but alas the contradiction still exists in most parts of Africa. I think we did not keenly listen to the words of the great Kwame and that is why we are still stagnated in the quack mire of poverty.

It is not so with the so called Asian Tigers – they came together as a people and took a direction defined by standards and quality. They learned to measure, they embraced efficiency of production and used conformity assessment as a basis for measuring progress and attained the state of the art. Their politicians though some were dictators, defined policies to support standards and quality and they integrated these into their day to day lives. They did not delay issues that would bring development to their countries owing to territoriality, but they expedited them for the benefit of all. From the little help they got from their development partners, they planted seeds of knowledge by doing instead of being forever dependent.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we sit here today to discuss the issues at hand let us strive to plant the seeds of harmony and not discord, so that so that we can see the light leading us on to our destined and cherished goal -- an integrated market for Africa that will improve the livelihoods of the 1 billion people of Africa through standards.

I would like to thank you all for finding time to come to Nairobi for this meeting and particularly, I would like to thank PTB for the support it has continuously given to African National Standards Bodies in building Quality Infrastructure.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I now declare this workshop officially opened.

Thank you.