

EAC wants varsities punished for charging fees in dollars

By Martin Kitubi

The East African Community (EAC) secretariat in Arusha, Tanzania, wants universities charging students from member states in dollars to be punished.

Ambassador Dr Liberat Mfumukeko, the EAC secretary general, said member states resolved that students from the region should pay the same tuition in the different countries.

He said this during the launch of Centre of Excellence for Information and Communications Technology (ICT) at Nelson Mandela African Institute of Science and Technology (NM-AIST) in Arusha.

Mfumukeko, who was

represented by Dr James Jowi, the principal education officer at the EAC secretariat in Arusha, said only a few universities were implementing the resolution.

He added that a number of training institutions continue to charge foreign students from the region in dollars.

"Stubborn institutions need to be whipped; they are failing regional integration. A student from Uganda should pay the same fees in any university across the region," he said, citing private academic institutions for being at the forefront of charging in dollars against the regional stand.

"Paying the same fees is part of the framework to facilitate the mobility of our East African

children," he said.

Prof. Joyce Ndalichako, the Tanzanian education minister, stressed that the region should allow students to study freely without impediments.

"For instance, here in Tanzania, we have students from Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, and we are happy to say they are treated just like Tanzanian students. This is what we want," she said.

Prof. Alexandre Lyambabaje, the executive secretary of the Inter-University Council of East Africa (IUCEA), said: "We are happy that member states have agreed to implement same fees for all our students."

Recently, while addressing a congregation at the West Nile Investment Symposium which

was held in Arua, President Yoweri Museveni warned universities against charging students from EAC in dollars.

Museveni said such acts were hindering regional integration and co-operation.

The East African region, through the IUCEA, recently embarked on transforming some 30 universities into regional centres of excellence.

Under the same design, NM-AIST will serve as the centre of excellence for ICT in the region. It will be a regional centre for research and post-graduate courses.

Dr Michael Kisangari, from NM-AIST, said the centres will help the region improve on research by training scholars from the region to attain PhDs.

He said the east and southern African countries face a challenge of inadequate academicians and that this explains why they came up with the mission.

Recently, three Ugandan universities were selected as centres of excellence in particular fields under the same arrangement.

These are Makerere University, Mbarara University of Science and Technology, and Uganda Martyrs University, Nkozi.

Makerere University will serve as a centre for crop improvement and nanotechnology.

Nanotechnology is a branch of technology that deals with dimensions and tolerances,

including the manipulation of individual atoms and molecules according to IOPScience.

Nanotechnology is currently used in applications aimed at conserving and improving the environment such as cleaning up existing pollution.

It is also used to improve manufacturing methods to reduce the generation of new pollution and make alternative energy sources more cost effective.

Mbarara University of Science and Technology will serve as a centre of excellence for herbal medicine, and it will champion research in that area.

The Uganda Martyrs' University Nkozi will become an agroecology centre of excellence for the region.