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Dear Prof. John Mbiti,

Re: Your Comments on the Proposed University of Southeastern Kenya

J. Masya and I were belatedly included in a Strategic Committee on the proposed South Eastern Kenya University.

Last year, there was a petition to the Head of State, by Kamba Elders- many your agemates! Some decisions were made that the imagined university takes over UKAI and utilizes the UKAI Board of Governors as an interim institution to plan the way forward. You are perhaps aware that Kenyatta University has a campus right next to UKAI. Further, the University of Nairobi has a campus at Kibwezi. Some committees were created to think through issues like physical planning, curriculum and financing etc, before creation of a Strategic Committee to specify key elements of the university for the long term.

As participants in the Strategic Committee, we have been very concerned that the proposed university is planned systematically unlike most of the others who have copied Nairobi serially. We also have sought to widen consultations on regional and national concerns.

A review of all public universities, by Prof. Kabiru Kinyanjui, had noted that there was no university specializing in mining. No doubt you are aware that large areas of Mutomo district are taken over by cement companies without added value to the community. Although gemstone mining is afoot the processing is not within the community. If it were there would be a major artisanal industry. Dryland Farming, Water Harvesting Technologies and Information Communication Technologies are key deficits in our community. Modern university creation thinking insists that universities address local community interests as well as national interests. Thus we think community training for utilization of these knowledge areas should be central concerns in imaging and operating this future university. Is this argument misplaced? Are there other key concerns?

We thought the Strategic committee could benefit from your thoughts on what are the important community concerns for this university to address. After all you are one of our first generation academics. Clearly you have eaten more salt than us!

We were going to inform our colleagues today about our asking for your comments. Unfortunately the scheduled meeting has been postponed so we make this request in our personal capacities.

Sincerely yours,

J. Masya

G-C. M. Mutiso