

## **Prof. Ngugi wa Thiongo delivers Public Lecture at UoN**

It was a historic opportunity for many to listen to a public lecture by one of Kenya's most celebrated literary icons, Prof. Ngugi wa Thiongo at the Taifa Hall, Main Campus on Thursday, June, 11, 2015 as he challenged the University community comprising of staff and students and the general public to embrace Kenyan products, companies and more so Kenyan culture and heritage.

Speaking to a house full of intellectuals and members of the public, Prof. Ngugi wa Thiongo narrated about one of his early literary works, *Weep Not, Child*, a book that was written during the independence era and published in 1964 by East Africa Publishers among his many other literary works.

He challenged Kenyans to appreciate Kenyan products, made in Kenya as opposed to importing everything from either Europe or the East. He wondered why Kenyans cannot make cars, aeroplanes among other things.

Comparing Kenya to South Korea, he noted that the two countries gained their independence almost at the same time, but one has made more significant economic growth than the other. He challenged Kenyans to wake up and compete with the Asian giants. It was at that particular point that he congratulated the University of Nairobi for coming up with bottled mineral water called Royal Satima and branded Yoghurt milk among other home grown products.

Prof. Ngugi, who is currently a distinguished Professor of Comparative Literature and English at the University of California, Irvine, has roots from this University. He was the Chair of Department of Literature before he went into exile in early 1970s.

In his remarks, the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mbithi noted that the 50 years celebration of the literary works by Prof. Ngugi wa Thiongo was indeed an honour for the University. Prof. Mbithi noted that art defines our identity. Using the major claim of Ubuntu - I am because you are, he noted that he is a product of Kenyan society. Quoting from one of Prof. Ngugi's books - *Decolonizing the mind*, Prof. Mbithi noted that after decolonizing the mind, human progress becomes possible.

The celebration of *Weep Not, Child*, the second novel by Prof. Ngugi wa Thiongo, though it was the first one to be printed by East African Publishers, comes 50 years after the book was first printed in 1964.

Earlier in the day, Prof. Ngugi paid a courtesy call on the Vice-Chancellor in his office where he was met by the top university management. He commended the management for the good infrastructural development and good webometrics ranking. He later visited the Department of Literature for a colloquium.