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Students call for higher education improvement

By TIMES Reporters

THE Student Organisation of Nairobi University (SONU) on Monday appealed to the IMF, World Bank and the donor community to assist in looking for ways of improving higher education in the country.

In a statement by the SONU secretary-general, Mr Joseph Kioko, the student leaders condemned the nature and criteria Higher Education Loans Board uses in allocating loans to the students.

Mr Kioko cited the harsh economic situation prevailing in the country and said that every student looks upon HELB for survival. He said any misallocation and unfairness would be detrimental to the needy students.

"We, therefore, demand that there be transparency in the HELB and that criteria of loan allocation be disclosed to students," he said.

Mr Kioko further added that thorough vetting should be done to establish the deserving students or else they would call for a total overhaul of the board.

The organisation complained about some loopholes existing in the Higher Education Loans Board as follows:

Two students from the same family in the university get different loan allocation despite giving the same information on the financial background;

A student allocated full loan in the last academic year ended up getting nil;

A student in third year got nil, in first year Sh42,000, in second year and 20,000 in third year. How does HELB rate the fluctuation? and

Extreme cases of needy students, some orphans are not awarded loans despite attaching relevant supporting documents.

"This and many more are issues that make students stressed, sick and above all, reduce them into beggars who spend their time cooking in their rooms rather than achieving academic excellence," he said.

Mr Kioko directed the sentiments to the secretary of the loans board, saying that all pending cases of appeal should be considered immediately before any action is taken. The appeal of those students who got nil should be quickly processed and they be awarded loans, he suggested.