



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. JOSEPH BARRAGE WANJUI, CBS, CHANCELLOR OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI DURING THE 36TH GRADUATION CEREMONY OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI HELD ON MONDAY 4TH DECEMBER 2006 AT THE
CHANCELLOR'S COURT.**

Minister for Education, Prof. George Saitoti

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Prof. Karega Mutahi

The Chairman of the University Council, Mr. John Simba

Vice-Chancellor, Prof. George Magoha

Members of the University Council

Vice-Chancellors of sister Universities

Deputy Vice-Chancellors of the University of Nairobi

Principals of Colleges

Deans of Faculties and Directors of Schools, Institutes, Boards and Centres

Chairmen and Heads of Departments

Academic Staff

Graduands

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I extend my special greetings and best wishes to all of you gathered here today to participate in the 36th Graduation Ceremony of the University of Nairobi exceptional achievement. This is a special occasion for the graduands, their parents, teachers and the entire University community because it marks the successful conclusion of a long and often difficult journey to academic excellence. I want to commend you for choosing the premier University in Kenya and congratulate you for completing your studies in record time.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the sixth graduation I am presiding over as the Chancellor of this great University. The regularity with which the University of Nairobi is holding its graduation ceremonies is both an indication of our output and confirmation that the University has changed for the better. We have not only expanded access to higher education by pioneering the extremely successful module II programmes but also continue to produce quality manpower required for the country's development.

Graduands, as we release you to the world today, it is important to note that there are as many challenges that lie ahead of you as there are opportunities. Your success will depend on how you tackle the challenges and utilize the opportunities that come your way. The University of Nairobi has equipped you with the necessary skills that will enable you find your niche in an extremely competitive globalised knowledge economy that is characteristic of the 21st Century.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in our endeavour to become a world class University, we have been confronted by numerous constraints among them limited financial resources. The problem of funding of higher education is worldwide and solutions can only be long term. We have approached this chronic problem as a team and this spirit has enabled us to move forward with our development agenda. Part of our development agenda is to create an environment that can attract and retain the best scholars not only in the region but the world. For the University to achieve that, it will require sufficient resources to pay its staff competitive salaries. Both the Government and University recognize this and are doing their best to address the problem. The current industrial action by the Universities

Academic Staff Union (UASU) that paralysed learning in all public Universities save for the University of Nairobi is wasteful and cannot be the solution to the problem. I am therefore pleased that although our team spirit was threatened we remained open and fully operational because of our firm commitment to our institution and country.

In this connection I would like to take this opportunity to thank our academic staff for doing what is right though not popular with their colleagues. They chose to uphold the rule of law by following negotiations as directed by the Industrial Court and have continued to undertake their assignments and perform their duties in accordance with their terms of employment. It is this bold action that has enabled us to be here today, to celebrate our 36th Graduation Ceremony.

I also wish to commend our students and their leaders under the stewardship of SONU and its Chairman, Mr. Gitobu Mutiga for remaining disciplined and resisting the temptation to be drawn into the industrial dispute between faculty members and their employer. Their exemplary conduct not only ensured that our academic programmes continue normally but has also helped to change the public

perception of students and indeed contributed to the improvement of our corporate image.

In Kenya like most other countries in the World, University dons are the cream of society. They represent what every Kenyan would want: our inspiration. Our expectations of the academic staff are high and include logical thought, decorum, capacity to negotiate, leadership and defense of rules and regulations that govern our institutions and rule of law. The University of Nairobi academic staff have done us proud by demonstrating these qualities. We hope that those others who are leading the negotiations will demonstrate similar qualities. My humble advice to the parties is to embrace dialogue to unlock the impasse that has paralysed learning in our sister universities as many innocent students are bearing the brunt of the strike. As Sir Winston Churchill put it “ the price of greatness is responsibility.” Let us embrace this spirit to solve this problem.

I am happy to note that amongst individuals who have been graduating of late are men and women who, despite their heavy work schedules and responsibilities, have spared time and committed themselves to self academic advancement at the

University of Nairobi and passed their examinations well. Over the years these individuals have included top personnel from the public and private sectors. I urge the University to continue expanding access to higher education to many more qualified Kenyans to realize their dreams and develop a strong human resource base in the country. However this should not be done at the expense of quality because we shall be judged by the products we release to the market.

Ladies and Gentlemen let us not forget that an educated person still commands enviable respect in society and this is not only true in third world countries but also in the developed world. As an educated person you will find yourself more acceptable to peers, seniors, juniors alike. The belief in education is exemplified by the kind of sacrifices Kenyans are willing to make to acquire knowledge. To most people in society, education is the only route to better life.

I am confident that the University of Nairobi will continue to provide leadership in our endeavour to build a better country and improve the lives of our people. I also wish to appeal to our graduands not to desert us but to now join the

University of Nairobi Alumni Association, so that you too, can play an active role in building the University.

Finally I would like to congratulate our graduands once again on their distinguished achievement. May the society open opportunities for your contribution and growth of your careers.

THANK YOU