



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROF. A.O. MAGOHA, VICE-CHANCELLOR,
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 36TH GRADUATION
CEREMONY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI ON MONDAY 4TH DECEMBER
2006 AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT**

The Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Dr. Joseph Barrage Wanjui

Minister for Education, Hon. Prof. George Saitoti

Chancellors of Other Universities

The Chairman of University of Nairobi Council,

Mr. John Simba

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education,

Prof. Karega Mutahi

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Science and Technology, Prof. Crispus

Kiamba

Members of the University of Nairobi Council

Vice-Chancellors of other Universities

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Deputy Vice-Chancellors, University of Nairobi

Principals of Colleges

Deans/Directors of Faculties/Schools and Institutes

Chairmen and Heads of Departments

Graduands

Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me take this opportunity to warmly welcome you all to the University of Nairobi and to the 36th Graduation Ceremony. I would like to congratulate all the graduands for your achievement and also thank your parents, guardians, teachers and all those who contributed to the successful completion of your studies.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the graduands before you are drawn from the College of Health Sciences and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and a few from the College of Education and External Studies who did not graduate on 1st September when other Colleges had their graduation.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the University of Nairobi remains committed to its vision of a premier African University extending the frontiers of knowledge through teaching, research, creative works, consultancy and community service. As the leading research University in Kenya, the University of Nairobi must ensure that it becomes an epicentre for creating new knowledge because university level teaching that is not grounded in research becomes stale very

fast. The University thus recognizes research and research – led teaching as primary responsibilities of its academic staff, and places value on fostering, publishing, and disseminating research of the highest international quality.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, for quite a long time our efforts to enhance Research and Development activities at the University have been hampered by lack of adequate funds. Financing of research has always come from the following sources:

- **The Government which constitutes the traditional source. The Government budget is however under severe pressure thereby limiting the amount of money allocated to the University for research,**
- **From the students who provide in general a (small) fraction of the corresponding cost,**
- **And from foreign donors and collaborators who remain the key source of research funds for the University responsible for 80% of the total annual research budget of KShs.500 million.**

The University will continue seeking partners, both local and international to strengthen its research capacity. In this regard, I wish to commend our academic staff for taking the initiative to source for research funds to supplement what is provided by the University, students, and Government. The following members of staff who have attracted funds to the University in excess of KShs.100 million over the last four years deserve special mention:

- 1. Prof. John Mulaa, Department of Biochemistry – KShs. 125 million through the European Union and SIDA – SAREC Project Grants**
- 2. Prof. Job Bwayo, Dr. Walter Jaoko and Dr. Omu Anzala, Department of Medical Microbiology – KShs.344 million through Kenya AIDS Vaccine Initiative (KAVI)**
- 3. Profs. Elizabeth Ngugi, Violet Kimani and Joyce Olenja, Department of Community Health KShs.330 million through Strengthening STD/HIV/AIDS Control Project**

4. **Prof. Ruth Nduati and Dr. Elizabeth Obimbo, Department of Paediatrics and Child Health – KShs.217 million through Kesho Bora and Acts AIDS projects**
5. **Prof. Dorothy McCormick, Prof. Njuguna Ng'ethe and Dr. Mary Omosa, Institute for Development Studies and Prof. Peter Kimuyu, School of Economics – KShs.156 million through the Chronic Poverty (CPRC-K) Project.**

Ladies and Gentlemen, the University of Nairobi through innovation and discovery can be a powerful engine for change and transformation in the coming decades. Our academic staff have demonstrated that they are equal to the task of creating, preserving, integrating, transmitting and applying knowledge. The University of Nairobi Council, Management and Senate are indeed very grateful to these gallant academic members of staff and encourages others to follow suit in our journey towards world class excellence.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the challenges facing the University of Nairobi and indeed all public Universities are many. The financing of the University has been a persistent problem which must be addressed as a matter of urgency if we are to achieve our goal of world class excellence. When it became apparent that the industrial action which had been called by the Academic Staff Union (UASU) was going to become a reality, I together with my deputies decided to visit all colleges to explain to all academic staff the likely negative impact of the strike on our great institution.

As I explained to the dons, the relationship between UASU and the University management need not be adversarial because we both want the same thing – improvement of staff remuneration and working environment. In that regard I am extremely grateful to the academic staff for embracing dialogue as a means of resolving disputes. Their decision to continue teaching while their counterparts chose industrial action is a clear manifestation of their commitment to service to community and country. We commend them

wholeheartedly for their willingness to make personal sacrifices for public good and for this great nation.

I also wish to thank most sincerely officials of the Academic Staff Union (UASU) Nairobi Chapter for teaching and carrying out their other academic duties during this period of strike in the other public universities. We are grateful that our academic staff fully understand the fact that the university of Nairobi is different from other public universities. I wish to emphasize that the University of Nairobi cannot and will not survive a strike by the academic staff due to the simple fact that it depends on the same staff to generate a very significant percentage of its annual budget either through their participation in the Module II academic programmes or their attraction and retention of research funds from our International collaborators.

I also wish to most sincerely commend our student leaders, SONU and all campus based student associations for leading from the front. They have ensured that all our students remain disciplined and resisted all manner of

attempts to incite them into acts that would have disrupted our academic programmes. The University of Nairobi Council Management, Senate and staff are proud to be associated with all our students.

Needless to say Mr. Chancellor Sir, that I am thoroughly encouraged by the positive direction the University of Nairobi has taken. I would like to assure you that we will continue making trails into the unknown for others to follow. I further wish to commend SONU for reviewing the SONU constitution to include all the 32,100 students at University of Nairobi.

I wish to thank most sincerely the government through the Ministry of Education for allowing us a freer hand in the running of the University. This has greatly enhanced corporate governance at the University and significantly contributed to the peace and harmony existing currently at the University. I wish to emphasize that the University of Nairobi remains a truly Kenyan institution and our yardstick will remain competitive meritocracy in all that we do including appointment and promotion of staff.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the University of Nairobi has a distinguished record and accomplishment in teaching, research, development, consultancy and entrepreneurship. The University has responded to the country's, regional, Africa's and international high-level manpower training needs and demands by developing programmes and specializations in pure sciences, applied sciences and technology, humanities, social sciences and the arts.

The University currently has approximately 400 academic programmes including undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma, masters and PhD levels spread over 100 different academic Departments, Faculties, Institutes, Schools and Centres.

Mr. Chancellor sir, today we are graduating over 3,000 students from the Colleges of Humanities and Social Sciences and Health Sciences and another 29 Bachelor of Education Science students from the College of Education and External Studies. The undergraduate group includes 234 Lawyers, 230

Medical Doctors, 56 Pharmacists and 28 Dental Surgeons just to mention a few. It is significant to note that only the University of Nairobi trains Dentists and Pharmacists for the whole nation. The postgraduate group includes 8 PhD's, over 700 masters degrees including 78 Master of Medicine graduates in various medical disciplines, 6 Master of Dental Surgery, 381 Master of Business Administration, 31 Master of Arts in Economics and 14 Master of Laws graduates among others.

The University of Nairobi is proud to have played host to major international figures like Senator Barack Obama of Illinois and Ambassador Mohamed Sahnoun, UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to Great Lakes. The fact that such eminent persons chose to come to the University is indeed a confirmation that we are an important regional centre of excellence.

Furthermore, the University of Nairobi 2005/2006 Calendar won first prize at the recently concluded Public Relations, Marketing and Communications Awards organized by the Association of Commonwealth Universities in

Toronto, Canada. The prize was received on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor by the Acting Planning Registrar, Mr. Wycliffe Asila.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, quality infrastructure is critical if the University is to achieve its desired goal of becoming an international centre of excellence. To this end, the University of Nairobi has continued to rehabilitate the existing infrastructure, and complete many of the stalled projects. Work on the Central Examinations Center situated at Chiromo is also in progress, when completed it will strengthen further the examination process in the University of Nairobi.

The University has also continued to expand and strengthen its ICT infrastructure by establishing and equipping computer laboratories for students and staff. This no doubt has contributed to the improvement in our ranking, which is 21 in Africa from position 26 in the previous year. It is in this regard, that the University wishes to thank its donors and partners who have contributed towards the acquisition of the critically needed ICT

resources. These developments will help to maximize students and staff productivity, enhance teaching and learning and improve quality of research through ICT.

Ladies and Gentlemen, one of the core functions of the University is community service, the University continues to participate in community programs and activities as part of its corporate social responsibility. I wish to thank SONU and medical students for organizing a very successful medical camp at Korogocho in Nairobi on Saturday 18th November 2006 at which some 1823 Kenyans were examined and treated free of charge.

As I indicated earlier, Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the second of two graduation ceremonies scheduled for this year. We have been able to achieve this because of the current total tranquility that exists at the University. I must once again commend our student community and their leaders through the Umbrella body of SONU for the remarkable improvement in student discipline. The benefits of this new culture of dialogue and peaceful

resolution of disputes are self-evident. This University is therefore definitely different and as the mother and grandmother of all the other public universities, we must lead from the front.

Finally Mr. Chancellor Sir, on behalf of Management and Council, I wish to thank you most sincerely for your most unequivocal support for the changes we have initiated at the University over the past 2 years.

As you can see for yourself, all the staff and students are with us in our march towards a world class excellence.

In concluding, let me once again congratulate our graduands for doing us proud. As you enter a new phase in your lives, we are confident that you will be able to use the skills you have acquired to improve yourselves and serve your community and country well.

On behalf of my management, I also wish to most sincerely thank the University Council for their continued guidance and support. I wish to assure Council that we shall not be distracted by a few side

shows from our principal objective which is to implement Council policies in the 21st century without fear or favour.

Thank you.