



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**REMARKS BY DR. JOSEPH B. WANJUI, CHANCELLOR,
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, DURING THE OCCASION OF
THE 45TH GRADUATION CEREMONY, ON FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER 9, 2011 AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT**

Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology,

Hon. Prof. Margaret Kamar

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education,

Science and Technology, Prof. Crispus Kiamba

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners

Chairman of the University Council, Mr. John Simba

Vice-Chancellor, Prof. George Magoha

Council Members

Distinguished Scholars

Graduands

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to join you all as we celebrate yet another graduation ceremony. The graduands have reason to celebrate, they have been diligent and have worked hard turning in excellent results. It could not have been easy but because of your academic discipline, you have made it. Congratulations!

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we celebrate the passing out of these graduands, I urge them to remember that there are challenges in the world that they are bound to encounter. The graduands before us are drawn from four colleges and are mainly professionals with the skills that our country, Kenya requires in its quest to attain Vision 2030. You are a strategic resource and no doubt will join the pool of skills that will determine whether we attain Kenya Vision 2030. It is important therefore that you

understand your role, this is because for the last three years, the global economic downturn has had drastic effects. This, coupled with a long drought has of course affected countries in the Greater Horn of Africa, dislocating many people. In the last two months, we have all seen the hungry people of Turkana, and Somalia, and the effect that the dislocation has placed on a large portion of Kenya's north.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the implications of the global economic crisis has included diminished job opportunities, job creation and investments. It is clear that the State has limited resources to hire and many local firms are downsizing. It is the duty of the graduands in front of us today, to use the skills and training that they have attained to be innovative and

creative in terms of creating employment for yourself. I believe that the value of education is that it opens opportunities, you are thus well placed to achieve your potential because of the training that you have. Every graduation, as we confer the degrees, we tell graduands that they have the power to read and to do all that appertains to the degree. We challenge you therefore to take your place, to establish your niche and achieve your goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the graduands present here are passing out when the country has undergone several reforms. The new constitution with its clauses on devolved governance provide opportunities for this core group to enhance the new system of government. I implore you not to hang around Nairobi but instead seize

the opportunities being presented by the creation of county government for employment; use your privileged position in society as a 'professional elite'.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am confident that the graduands in front of us, and those who have graduated from this Institution should help the country to unlock the perennial problem of food deficiency, disease and malnutrition. I have over time been asking "why should we import food from Malawi which is several years behind us in terms of economic development? Can the engineers, planners, agriculturalists deal with these problems. If you cannot get jobs, what about horticulture, start schools, engineers can handle drought through drilling boreholes, irrigation etc. The scientists from Chiromo can help to transfer technology to

empower local communities and to assist them to use local resources more effectively and efficiently, to better their lives.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the human resource of a nation is a vital commodity that should neither be wasted nor ignored. It is not enough to graduate the numbers and then watch them waste their lives. I believe that the reconstruction of this country's economy can be handled if we use this cohort in front of us to confront our challenges squarely. Let the young people of this nation embrace a work ethic. Let us all instead of always being critical of government, with all these statements that one hears these days "the government should, government should" – we should always take into consideration our own responsibility for making various

systems work. “Unless we as a people learn to do our assigned jobs well at whatever level we find ourselves, then we should stop making a fuss about being able to govern ourselves.

Ladies and Gentlemen, at this juncture, allow me to thank our government for appointing a new Council to run this University. The Council has been refreshed, with new people, with new ideas that will no doubt enrich the Council strengthening it to grow. I look forward to working with a more vibrant Council especially in the face of increased competition and the demand for relevant, quality disciplines. I urge the new Council, under Mr. John Nyangeri Simba, to be more aggressive in terms of sourcing for alternative source of finance. If this will include benefactors and new partners then so be it.

The budget of the University is bound to grow, yet government resources are not likely to match this growth. The Council then must find smart ways of realizing revenue.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in early 2011, the University of Nairobi established two new positions of Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Student Affairs and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research, Production and Extension. I wish to congratulate Prof. Isaac Mbeche and Prof. Lucy Irungu for being appointed to these positions respectively. I believe that by now, given the expansion of their mandate, they should produce better results. I believe that research, which is the missing link in African development, should be enhanced, with science/innovations taking off. I look forward to a time

where we can honestly count the number of innovation that will be registered and patented to the University of Nairobi. Research, Production and Extension is important for any University. With a new Deputy Vice-Chancellor, we should be more visible.

In terms of Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Student Affairs, we have noted over time that there has been a regression in the gains made on student discipline. I believe that the office of Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Student Affairs will strengthen the area of discipline so that we have better a public image. There is need for more dialogue and interaction with the student leadership especially in the light of the deaths of students in circumstances that could have been avoided need not be over emphasized.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the management of the University. They have done well delivering services to the stakeholders. However, they should not rest on their laurels and should strive to do much better. I wish to indeed thank the Chairman of Council for providing the leadership that has enabled the management to succeed.

In terms of the governance structure, my challenge is for Council to comply with government policy for efficient and effective service delivery setting high standards “The 21st century is unique to some extent in the sense that the world is so small, and we all hustling for the same things. The only equalizer is what the University of Nairobi does. If you delude yourselves that you can aim at mediocrity and survive, then you lose the point”

Ladies and Gentlemen, we the stakeholders in this country will benefit from the human resources that the University equips the country with. Please challenge the University to help this country to grow. Competition is stiff, but it is changing the way that we do things, let us embrace and accept the change.

As I conclude, I wish to once again congratulate the graduands, let us all celebrate these young people, they have done us proud and we charge them to take the same excellence into the world and in so doing, help to strengthen our institution.

Thank you.