



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY MR. JOHN SIMBA, CHAIRMAN
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI COUNCIL, DURING
THE 34TH GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI HELD ON FRIDAY 9TH
DECEMBER, 2005 AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT.**

Minister for Education, Science and Technology,

The Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Dr. J.B. Wanjui

**Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science
and Technology, Prof. Karega Mutahi**

**Vice-Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Prof. George
A.O. Magoha,**

Chancellors of Sister universities,

Members of the University of Nairobi Council

Vice-Chancellors of our sister universities,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps.

Deputy Vice Chancellors of the University of Nairobi

Principals of Colleges

Deans of Faculties and Directors of Institutes

Chairmen and Head of Departments

Graduands

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the University Council, let me welcome you all to the University of Nairobi, and particularly to this, the 34th Graduation ceremony. Like any institution which seeks to proudly display its best products, to-day this University is presenting to the nation and the world, young men and women who have earned the right to read and do all that appertains to the academic achievements which will be bestowed on them by our Chancellor today. It is a moment to savour and feel proud about. On behalf of the council and the university community, I congratulate you. For you the graduands, it is also a time for reflection; reflection not only about the future but even more importantly regarding the sacrifice your parents, guardians, relatives and friends have made to see you through the years you have been at this fine institution. Let us all spare a moment and thought to thank them for their sacrifice and patience. Many of them are here to-day to bear witness as you receive your academic credentials and are conferred with your respective degrees. Your

consistent hard work throughout your stay at the University has indeed come to fruition today. You should therefore be deservedly happy for your success. Without taking away the feeling of happiness which you richly deserve, let me add that the achievement we celebrate with you to-day is but only the beginning. As you journey in pursuit of your goals; your dreams you should always look back and acknowledge the firm foundation which your professors, lecturers and those responsible for imparting knowledge to you have laid to enable you be the best you can be in your chosen profession. So, always remember your alma mater. Challenges will face you. Moments of triumph will be intermingled with situations of failure and hopelessness; but remember that success and failure are both critical components of the learning curve. Strive to maintain your course and never lose sight of your goals.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, Ladies and Gentlemen, as Chairman of Council, I feel honoured and privileged to preside over the Board of such an esteemed institution. Let me

take this opportunity to thank my fellow Council Members for the support they have given me during the last nine months we have been in office. Talent abounds in the Council; I am convinced that working as a team, we shall assist the University advance its core objectives of teaching and research, programmes and obligations to our great nation.

The University of Nairobi has over the years contributed immensely to the development of our nation by providing knowledge to people for each and every sector of our economy; and developing solutions to deal with the many challenges of development we face as a nation; such a poverty, health, education. We take pride in our capacity to produce all cadre of professionals.

Mr. Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen, the University of Nairobi by its size, in the number of academic staff at all levels, research activities, student population, and physical facilities is a model for other public

Universities in Kenya, the region and, indeed should now be up there among the world's best. The challenge we have set ourselves in this respect, is to move the University "Towards World Class Excellence".

In an endeavour to attain the aforementioned goals, the University currently has in place a five year Strategic Plan. Certain targets are set for each college and other administrative units to meet, on a yearly basis. The University is committed towards meeting these targets as spelt out in its Strategic Plan. The Council and I as Chairman assume the responsibility of seeing to it that these targets are met as we move towards our objective. I am pleased to announce that in our quarterly Report to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology for the current financial year, we have met all our targets set for the present quarter. The University will endeavour to keep up the good work, as it is only by so doing that we shall really achieve the world-class status that we strive for. Congratulations to all those who have made this possible; but much remains to be done.

Other developments, such as the competitive filling of top management positions, presence of a Service Charter, Appraisal exercises, introduction of competitive and market driven courses, will also definitely propel us towards the status we seek. Council on its part, will offer leadership, direction, advise and support to the University to enable it realise its goals.

Among the activities of the University is carrying out research. In addition to the core business, other activities include the dissemination of information, as well as to store information for use by future generations. Let me comment on the issue of Research. Upon my appointment as Chairman of Council, I immediately embarked on a tour of the various campuses of the University. It goes without saying that the University is richly endowed with vast resources, both physical and human.

The University has the capacity to produce the highest number of applicable research findings when benchmarked against all the universities in our country. Indeed, I noted that quite a number of research activities are currently underway in all the colleges I visited. My wish and that of the Council is that these researches should be completed as scheduled, and their application be implemented in the quickest time possible. In this way we shall give back to society and continue to entrench our relevancy and existence as a University.

Research without patenting will only enable the researcher to broaden the frontiers of knowledge without achieving the other critical component of protecting the university's intellectual property. It is imperative for the university to patent its products and inventions. This is a theme I shall return to again and again because an opportunity exists of achieving both academic and business goals. I, however, note with appreciation that the University is working closely with the Kenya Industrial Property Institute to make sure

that the university develops its own patenting policy. I am informed that a document to this regard has already been developed and what remains is just a few bolts and nuts to be put in place to operationalize this policy. I am also informed that officials of the Kenya Industrial Property Institute have held a series of lectures at the University to sensitize staff on the importance of patenting its research findings. Council on its part will lend its support and advise whenever called upon to do so.

One of the major challenges facing the university is that of finances. The University of Nairobi is the largest public university in the country, with the largest number of staff, students and programmes. It also runs the highest number of professional courses such as medicine, dentistry, engineering among others, which requires provision of adequate funds to enable it manage its activities and programmes. However, due to competing social and economic needs for the Government's pruned adequate funds are not always available to meet and fund the university's activities.

The University budget is 3 billion per year but the government's provision of KShs.1 billion leaves the University with a shortfall of about 2 billion shillings. The university must generate sufficient cash flow to cover this gap. Through the introduction of parallel programmes and other income generating activities, the university has managed as best as it could to bridge the shortfall. However, despite its best efforts, finances still remain a major challenge to the university. To alleviate this problem, appropriate proposals have been made to the Government. The acceptance of these proposals will go a long way in ensuring that the University generates enough funds to manage its activities and ease the demand on the Government finances. The Government is committed to the provision of quality education and should be commended for the funds it has outlaid for educational purposes we are confident that our proposals will be carefully considered and appropriate advice offered.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today is a day for the graduands; their proud parents, relatives, guardians

and friends. But before concluding my remarks, let me thank the Government for its continued support to the university, to you Mr. Chancellor for your guidance and support, to the members of the Council, the Vice-Chancellor and his team, the students and the university community.

Finally to the granduands; however you chose to pursue your goals, your dreams may successfully be yours.

Happy Jamuhuri Day and complements for the coming festive season. God bless you all.

Thank you