



## **UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. JOSEPH BARRAGE  
WANJUI, CBS, CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY  
OF NAIROBI, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 34<sup>TH</sup>  
GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NAIROBI HELD ON FRIDAY 9<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2005.**

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**The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education,  
Science and Technology**

**The Chairman of the University Council**

**The Vice-Chancellor, University of Nairobi**

**Members of the University Council**

**Deputy Vice-Chancellors**

**Hon. Members of Parliament**

**Your Excellencies the High Commissioners &  
Ambassadors**

**Your Worship the Mayor**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Members of Academic Staff**

**Graduands**

**Parents and Guardians**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

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**It gives me great pleasure as I welcome all of you to this yet another auspicious occasion, when we celebrate the 34<sup>th</sup> graduation ceremony of the University of Nairobi.**

**Let me take this opportunity to congratulate all the graduands seated here. We are gathered here today to recognise and celebrate your achievement. This no doubt is an important day in your lives, and we are proud of you.**

**I wish to remind all of us, that the road to acquireing knowledge is not easy. It requires sacrifice; dedication and commitment of the graduands, their parents and of course the academic staff. This wider community has seen you through the University. I trust that you will justify their hopes, their sacrifices, and their dreams.**

**As you go out into the world, I wish to share a few thoughts with you. It is true that you worked hard, which is a value to the world that you are joining, but beyond hard work, you require to espouse certain virtues to succeed in a higly competitive environment. The values of self-respect and respect**

**for the rule of law, diligence and a search for excellence in all your endeavours will stand you in good stead.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, successful people and institutions want to be the best that they can be at whatever it is they do. It is, therefore, understandable that the University of Nairobi should aspire to become a world-class University. Since we live in a global economy it makes sense to measure our abilities against the best the world has to offer.**

**So what does it mean to be world-class? In my view, there are some definite hallmarks of a world-class university. First, you must have outstanding faculty who are engaged in research, scholarship and creative activities that have an impact on people around the world – that change the way people around the world work and think. The best faculty members, Ladies and Gentlemen, do not simply teach the works of others; rather, they themselves discover, create and innovate. They make active contributions to what is thought taught and practiced around the world.**

**Indeed, a world-class university will be recognised as a place where top staff will wish to congregate. Given**

**the chance, staff from other universities will migrate to the world-class university, and top faculty attract top students. It is a place where people will want to be and spend time for the experience and to associate with the fame and respect that goes with this.**

**To what extent, therefore, can we at the University of Nairobi say that we are a world-class university? In my view, when we speak of the University of Nairobi as a world-class university, we are essentially addressing our potential rather than arrogating where we are at present.**

**Whereas a world-class university is characterized by excellence in research, top quality academic staff, favourable working conditions, academic freedom and an atmosphere of intellectual excitement, internal governance, adequate facilities for academic work, adequate funding to support research as well as the university's other functions, the University of Nairobi cannot claim to have all these attributes.**

**I nevertheless want to reassure the congregation that the University of Nairobi is on the path to world-class excellence. It is not in question that the University has one of the strongest faculties in the region.**

**We admit the best students in the country who upon graduation have been able to pursue successful careers in diverse fields.**

**Our scholars are free to pursue knowledge wherever it leads and to publish their work freely without fear of sanction by anyone. As part of our five-year development plan, the University has embraced and is addressing favourable working conditions, salary and other benefits for staff. Further, the University has been expanding and improving teaching facilities. This no doubt has gone a long way in attracting back many top scholars and is stemming the migration of some of our best brains in search of**

**greener pastures. We have the ability to retain and attract staff. We know that we are the oldest, biggest and the tops in terms of human resources and specialisations in the Public Universities. We have a large opportunity to expand the frontiers of knowledge in this country. We want the University to enjoy this wealth of experience and diversified leadership.**

**I also wish to take this opportunity to thank the government and other donors for revitalizing funding to support research. The University, on its part, through its projects, and UNES has demonstrated**

**that it has capacity to manage resources in these very challenging times.**

**We are aware that to attain the status of a world-class university is a tall order, but we are convinced that we have what it takes to be such an institution. We have good schools, we are working towards top scholars, we are trying to improving life of our scholars and we have managed resources ably. WE WILL GET THERE.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, most public Universities depend only on the exchequer. But hard economic**

**times and competing priorities for the public purse have taught us to be more creative. We at the University of Nairobi are proud of a certain amount of success in the generation of revenue using the resources at our disposal to supplement the declining subventions from the Exchequer. We spurred, created and set an example by reducing our reliance on scarce resources from government.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, we must commend the student community and their leaders for the improved and strong discipline. We have been able to have three graduation ceremonies in one calendar year partly because of the tranquility that is now**

**being experienced at the university. This is what Kenyans expect of their University, dignity and leadership.**

**Ladies and gentlemen, a majority of our students are from humble backgrounds needing genuine support. We have identified the most needy students and through work-study programs, linkages with donors and trusts, we have been able to support them to follow their studies without difficulty. We have been able to house most of our students and subsidized food is available. Our students organisations continue to be integrated into the decision making space. They are part of the process of governance**

**particularly on matters that affect them. This constructive engagement and a more student friendly atmosphere can only continue to improve the general environment under which students learn.**

**As indicated earlier, great Universities are respected and admired by their communities. Their voice is often listened to and reflected upon. The University of Nairobi scholars have contributed immensely to the social economic development of this nation. They have been part of the think tank on policy in all the critical areas such as agriculture, health, the environment, and even in politics. We are proud that while we have opened opportunities to all in search**

**of knowledge, we have opened opportunities to all in search of knowledge, we have not undermined standards; we will be able to address the issue of limited capacity and the function of education for rapid development.**

**Honored guests, the decentralization of graduation ceremonies is part of the restructuring process meant to streamline the operations of the university. Our core concern as an institution is to create teams of highly motivated professionals with a commitment to achieve the mission and vision of the University. To this extent then, we instituted a performance management system. We need to sustain this, we are**

**churning out quality graduands, but we urge Alumni, industry and friends to join us in the endeavor to develop this august institution into a truly world class university. Greater partnerships in international programs must be strengthened because the potential exists and is great.**

**I wish to commend the University management for having the courage to undertake reforms that are meant to make the University of Nairobi a leading centre of excellence not only in the region but also internationally. The task before us is not easy but it certainly is not impossible.**

**Once again, I congratulate the graduands today for their achievement. I also thank all our guests for finding time to join us on this occasion and wish you a Merry Christmas and Prosperous new year.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

**THANK YOU**