



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH BY DR. JOSEPH BARRAGE WANJUI, CBS,
CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, ON
THE OCCASION OF THE 43RD GRADUATION
CEREMONY AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT ON
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2010.**

**Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology, Hon. William
Ruto, EGH, MP**

Your Excellencies, the Ambassadors and High Commissioners,

**Prof. Crispus Kiamba, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Higher Education,
Science and Technology**

Mr. John Simba, Chairman, University of Nairobi Council,

Council Members,

Prof. George Magoha, Vice-Chancellor, University of Nairobi

Deputy Vice-Chancellors

College Principals

Deans and Directors of Faculties, Schools and Institutes

Parents and Guardians,

Graduands,

Students and staff

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am delighted to join you today in this joyous occasion of celebrating the 43rd graduation of our premier university. This graduation is a culmination of a long and challenging journey in pursuit of academic excellence. It symbolizes the transformation of students from the young, anxious and enthusiastic freshers to a group of dynamic professionals equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes who are ready and willing to take up any opportunity availed to them.

For the parents, guardians and sponsors, it is a confirmation that their investment has not been in vain. Their sons and daughters, who are graduating today, can hold their heads high as they proclaim, without fear of contradiction, that they came, they saw and they conquered.

For us at the University, we are proud to release to the labour market our latest products. Being ISO 9001:2008 certified, and with unwavering determination to be a world class institution, we remain committed to deliver to the labour market and indeed to society in general, consistent quality products in the form of our holistic graduates who are positively branded. The certificates that they will get is our guarantee that they have been trained, tested and tried and found to be worthy of the award. We therefore have no reservation in giving them the power to read and to do all what appertains to their degrees.

It is for this reason that this ceremony is such a momentous occasion for all of us gathered here today.

Over the last five years, we have consistently graduated groups of students whose programmes have not been interrupted. This had become a way of life and we are determined that it should remain our way of life.

Unfortunately, the pattern was interrupted by the recent riots following SONU elections whose process some students were not happy with consequently, there was destruction of property and unexpected closure of the University.

Given where we had come from, the riots were a step backward and therefore unacceptable. We pride ourselves as a community of scholars

who attract the cream of the society. For the said cream to engage in riots, they were failing the society. Considering that the University community is endowed with intellectual power, one would have expected that it is better placed to handle elections than most other sectors of the society. Indeed, in view of its place in society the University should provide the model electioneering process. Education is intended to transform the recipient to a better person. Riots and stone throwing should never be in the list of our strategies for dispute resolution. We would like to believe that the culture of stone throwing belongs to the Stone Age.

The disappointment notwithstanding, we can use the strike as a lesson to move forward to become a better society, based on what Senator Thomas Daschel calls four pillars of democracy i.e. tolerance, respect of the rule of law, participation and good leadership. We must internalize the values of tolerance and peaceful resolution of conflicts in today's modern world where people from different backgrounds often in pursuit of divergent interests have to live side by side. There can be no justification whatsoever for resorting to violence as a means of settling electoral disputes where there exist laws and procedures for dealing with such matters. A society that does not respect the rule of law is inherently unstable and chaotic and cannot develop.

University of Nairobi, your university where you are graduating today is one of the leading universities in Africa and the leading university in Kenya. Kenyans have just recently voted for a New Supreme Law for this Nation. It is reasonable to assume this university will continue to produce the leaders of this nation for many years to come.

The implementation, execution and perfection of the New Constitution will therefore be in your hands for the decades ahead. Will it be safe in your hands? Will you be able to tolerate views that are opposed to yours without calling for your supporters riot? These are not questions for me or your parents to answer. You must answer them before you leave this campus as an educated person. The future of Kenya for generations to come will depend on your leadership ability.

As students of this University, you have the freedom to elect leaders of your choice to represent you. But your opponents have their candidates also. Will you tolerate their victory today so that they can tolerate yours tomorrow. I urge both management and students to provide leadership in nurturing a culture of tolerance, participation and peaceful coexistence. This is crucial to democracy.

Since independence, the demand for access to education has been increasing at an as astounding rate. In this regard I wish to commend the University of Nairobi for going out of its way to increase access to education especially through the module II and III programmes. However, this expansion should not compromise the quality of the education we offer. We have a reputation to protect and we are determined to continue producing positively branded products.

I also wish to commend the University community for the improved ranking of the University that has seen it emerge as the best in the country. Being the best University is both an honour and a responsibility. As product of the society, you owe it to Kenyans to offer leadership in providing solutions and direction to the society. I therefore wish to

challenge the University of Nairobi community to assist our society in understanding the new laws. I urge you to take advantage of your critical mass of consciousness and help the government think through the structures and systems of the new constitution in order to ensure successful transition.

May I also take the opportunity to thank Government, through the parent ministry, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, for continued support. We look forward to continued support in order to enhance our effort to fulfill our mission and vision.

Ladies and Gentlemen, We are today releasing to the labour market, and to society, a team of young men and women who are among the best in the country and in the region. They have gone through the best institution of higher learning. They have been equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary not only for the potential jobs but also to navigate their way through life. Above all, they are itching to apply what they have learnt.

To all of you graduands, we are proud of you for successfully completing your various courses. Well done and congratulation. It is not everybody who is as privileged as you are. It has been said that for you to succeed you need three kinds of power; the power to begin, the power to continue and the power to finish. You have had all the three powers. Not only did you also finish, you finished strong.

We celebrate not the beginning but the end and end is a strong finish. Well done.

Today, we give you the forth power, the power to read and do all what appertains to your degree. Go ye out there and prove it to the world that you are a product whose quality is guaranteed. Go out there and be our ambassador by keeping the flag of the University flying high. You are a positive brand and we believe you have the ability to make yourself and the society better. From us we wish you success in whatever you focus on.

In conclusion, may I take this opportunity to thank you all of you for gracing this occasion. It is your presence that has made it so colourful. Once again thank you very much and God Bless you.