



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**REMARKS BY DR. JOSEPH B. WANJUI, CHANCELLOR,
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI, DURING THE OCCASION OF
THE 46TH GRADUATION CEREMONY, ON FRIDAY
DECEMBER 2, 2011 AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT**

**Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology,
Hon. Prof. Margaret Kamar**

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners

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

Other Chancellors – Names

Chairman of the University Council, Mr. John Simba

Vice-Chancellor, Prof. George Magoha

Council Members

Distinguished Scholars

Parents and Guardians

Staff

Students

Graduands

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my joy to be here with you today during this occasion to celebrate the 46th Graduation of this premier institution. This is an important time for the University as the young people before us have completed their studies. This is no mean achievement and we wish to acknowledge and commend you for the efforts that you have put in to achieve success. I wish to remind you that you are now at the beginning of bigger things that include the opportunity to start or enhance your careers. You are now more complete in terms of knowledge. This knowledge will give you power, if put into good use.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are all experiencing the challenges of a very complicated world. To my mind, and indeed my wish is to see that all members of staff of the University are well compensated in order to attract

and retain the best brains and workers. And yet, as a public university, we have to depend on the government for the necessary resources required to offer competitive terms to our staff. The prevailing economic conditions have unfortunately constrained the government's capacity to avail these resources. Indeed, this situation is unlikely to change in the near future.

I wish therefore to appeal to staff to exercise more patience, embrace dialogue and negotiations instead of resorting to industrial action. Let me point out that either way, the cheaper option is dialogue, and acceptance that we are all stakeholders in making this University a better institution.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to urge the Council, to find other ways to also motivate staff; this need not be financial. Creating an environment that appreciates staff and encourages them to produce is part of your mandate. It is the right of every worker to be paid a fair wage for their effort and labour. Indeed, the recent strike, in the public universities, could have been avoided with a little patience and willingness to talk openly. As we call for moderation, we must strive to avoid positions that waste time, money and ultimately undermine our academic programmes. That disappointment aside, I believe that this strike can be used as a letter test for a move forward, in making our society truly better. Democracy, as we all know is based on four pillars of tolerance, respect of the rule of law, participation and good leadership. It is the work of the Council to internalize

these values and the peaceful resolution of conflict, because our society comprises people from different backgrounds and interest, who have to live together daily. Let us embrace each other in a true sense of unity in diversity.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to commend the University for continuing to produce excellent graduates and scholars, despite the difficult circumstances. The products before us are well trained to take up positions in the world of work. The Late Wangari Maathai is a case in point as one of our products and is testament of the contribution of the University of Nairobi to capacity-build. Wangari's mobilization of people and resources, her commitment to develop people and communities and protect the environment, which we all value

demonstrates this excellence. Our tribute to Wangari Maathai is the legacy that she left behind, the Wangari Maathai Institute. The University of Nairobi must ensure that the project is completed as a monument to her and that the bequest will promote the environment and peace for future generations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, over the last six years, we have run an almost trouble free academic programme with little or minimal interruption. The challenge of dealing with students remains on course, as they enhance the image of the University. This University admits the largest body of students, most of whom have great potential which if properly developed can contribute to the transformation of our country as we endeavour to attain Vision 2030. I wish to appeal to you not to waste

this opportunity, allowing yourselves to be distracted by frivolous pursuits. It is common and acceptable that young people are curious, bold and adventurous – channel this energy into a firm foundation for your future. 2012 is an election year and our experience is that, young people who are the majority are the key determinant to whether or not the elections are successful. Be at the forefront to promote; preach, accommodate views and opinions, cultivate and promote understanding and respect for the rule of law. Avoid being drawn into messes that are inimical to your future. We look forward to you doing the right thing in your promising future.

The parents and guardians represented here have sacrificed a lot in order to put their children through

school. It is getting harder to do this as the World and National economy continue to falter. I wish to urge you however to continue to support your children, proffer advice and guidance and support the University to become a better institution. I am aware that the Alumni Association is addressing the issue of mentoring and wish to encourage other people to come forward on this scheme. Together we made the choice to bring our children to the University, we must ensure that our investment pays off.

The world is a very competitive village. If we want to succeed we must make our University great. And to quote Charles de Gaulle “Nothing great will ever be achieved without great men, and men are great only if they are determined to be so.” If we are determined to

be great men and women then we must be prepared to pay the price for greatness. And to quote Sir Winston Churchill, “the price of greatness is responsibility.”

The Union leaders in this university, the management and our students’ leaders are all men of action. They are educated and are not just average Kenyans. They know that we are responsible for uplifting the quality of life for Kenyans. In our advantaged, privileged space we must prepare to create jobs for ordinary Kenyans and grow and expand our economy.

I said our various university institution leaders are men of action. According again to great leader Charles de Gaulle and I quote “Every man of action has a strong dose of Egoism, Pride, Hardness and Cunning. But all

those things will be regarded as high qualities if he can make them the means to achieve great ends.” As a great university we must strive to make KENYA a great Nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish to commend the Council for the mantle it has taken up. The team, led by Mr. John Simba has continued to steer the University in the face of mounting challenges of finances in a responsible manner. I urge you to continue with the good work as we endeavour to change the University of Nairobi into an academic centre of excellence comparable to the best.

As I close my remarks, I wish to reiterate that where there are issues of concern, I will avail myself for consultations as necessary. Let us not rest on our laurels, as we expand education, we should maintain the

quality of education we offer, protecting our reputation and determination to produce positivity branded products.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of you for gracing this occasion and making it so colourful.

We are only 10 days away to Jamuhuri Celebrations. And soon it will be Christmas. As we leave this grounds may I take this early opportunity to wish you all a happy Jamuhuri, a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Thank you and God bless you.