



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH BY DR. VIJOO RATTANSI, OGW,
CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
DURING THE 55TH GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD
ON FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 2, 2016 AT THE
CHANCELLOR'S COURT AT 8.00 A.M.**

Ambassadors and High Commissioners

Chair of Council, Dr. Idle Farah Omar,

Chancellors from other universities

Vice-Chancellor Prof. Peter Mulwa Mbithi,

Vice-Chancellors from other universities

Members of the University Council,

Chair of Alumni, University of Nairobi

University Staff,

Invited guests,

Family,

Friends and most importantly, graduands, good morning!

I am happy to be here with you today to celebrate yet another joyous milestone in the lives of University of Nairobi achievers. I am certain some of the grandaunts here today will leave with a lot more than degrees; husbands, wives, girlfriends, lifelong friendships, cherished memories etc.

I am unsure if that speaks of the majority or minority of you.

Years ago, a conclave such as this would only have been possible at this University. Today, thousands graduate from many other public and private universities. There is therefore a subsisting need to reinforce and even refresh the brand of this university as the very crème

de la crème of university education in Kenya and the region. To do this we must join hands and work as a team. Our motto, *unitate et labore*, in unity and work speaks life into what we should together aspire and perspire.

Many of us stand as fine products of team work from many who have gone before us. At the basic family level, parents work together to provide basic needs,

physical safety and a sense of love and belonging to the members. At the community level, members work together to promote development, secure better living conditions and multiply opportunities for advancement for its children. At the education level, the government and the education service providers work together to shape the education agenda and provide opportunities for the country's citizen to

access the very best education and become competitive the world over.

Team work calls for 5 C's; contribution, collaboration, cooperation, communication and commitment. A great leader is therefore one who can leverage the 5 C's to make the sum of the whole greater than the sum of the parts. Barely a week ago Ms Vivianne Cheruiyot made Kenya proud by becoming the first Kenyan woman to win the 5,000 Metres Olympic gold. She won in

scintillating fashion but it took the team effort to take down Ms. Almaz Ayana from Ethiopia who at one point was more than 25 metres ahead of her. Contribution, collaboration, cooperation, communication and commitment within her ranks and file delivered Kenya's finest moment in the race and with that the 5,000Metres Olympic glass ceiling has been forever shattered.

Similarly, the university and her stakeholders must leverage the 5C's of teamwork to deliver the best for her constituents. She must work with the line Ministry to create human capital that meets the requirements of the Kenyan and world economy. She must work with the Commission for University Education to attain, maintain and even exceed minimum standards with regard to higher education standards. She must work with her faculty to get the

best out of them and afford them opportunities to retool them for the ever evolving demands of the future. She must work with the non-teaching staff to engender a supportive environment where the mission and vision for which the university was finds a glove fit. She must work with the students, her single largest stakeholder to equip them with the requisite skill, knowledge and competence to make meaningful contribution to the world. Ultimately, the university

consists of many parts that must work together seamlessly to deliver the shared mandate.

Teamwork notwithstanding, each stakeholder constituency must appreciate and respect the functional, governance and operational autonomy of the University.

It is said brains, like hearts, go where they are appreciated. It thus behooves the university, every so

often, to recognize and celebrate excellent contributions of her students and staff.

Let me take this opportunity to recognize the contribution of the Dean of School of Engineering Prof. Jackson Mbuthia. As you have heard from the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Mbuthia led the University to benefit from the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs (UNOOSA)-Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) KiboCUBE programme allowing the

University to use the KiboCUBE CubeSat to test technologies it has developed for the future launch of a larger earth observation satellite. At a time when many my age are living for today and for history, you have made me dream again, a dream that in years to come this university will not only conquer the earth but the skies too! I see a time when this university will lead the continent in transcending earthly bounds to touch the face of God. I may not get there with you, but

I will smile down from heaven and say *veni, vidi, vici*.

Indeed you came, you saw and you conquered.

To the Council Members, I salute you. I could never

walk a mile in your shoes. In the face of many

difficulties you have remained steadfast. You have

painstakingly trudged on despite many external odds.

You have shown great courage and stepped up to the

plate when your inaction would have been

catastrophic. Allow me therefore to thank you most sincerely.

To our President, and commander in chief of the Kenya Defence Forces- Hon. Uhuru Kenyatta and your office, thank you for honouring us. You have given this University unqualified support. We appreciate this kind gesture you have extended to us that fits seamlessly in the grand scheme of things.

In years to come history of this University will sing praises of your timely intervention. Our university buildings and other programs will stand as testament of your goodwill. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you Mr. President.

To the Vice Chancellor, I cannot thank you enough. Like the lion in the university logo, you have kept your hands firmly on the steering wheel despite many storms rocking your boat. Those who hold positions such as yours must never fall short of humility, valour and thick skin. I want to encourage you that even though the worst may yet come, I am confident you have developed the necessary fortitude to stay the course.

To the graduates, today we bestow upon thee the powers to read but more importantly all that pertains to your respective degrees. In days to come you will undoubtedly share similar struggles. You must arm yourself with the heart of a lion, the spirit to fight and not give up, the courage to invest your hope and energy even in causes that initially seem hopeless. The world may not appreciate your struggle but eureka moments have never been attained by a stroke of luck.

Let nobody cheat you that you will not fail. You will fail but every failure will bring you closer to success. If you do not fail, then you will be living too cautiously or not living at all. So go out there, take calculated risks. The rewards will be worthwhile. Formal employment is good but do not settle for good when better is possible. I plead with you to heed the call to entrepreneurship. Look outside the box...kick the box away even.

Access to credit is a challenge, but guess what, it will always be a challenge. Start small and build on that. The Kenyan landscape is in need of refreshing inspiration...dream it and create it! Strive to build and leave behind a legacy that delights and inspires all around the world. You all have the potential to refresh the world but you remain authors of your own fortune.

Wherever you will be in this world, I beseech thee to uphold the values of integrity and professionalism. Be above reproach. In a world teeming with opportunities for corruption and easy gain, take the moral high ground. Don't let the noise of others stifle your silent inner voice. Hold fast that which is good. Heed the words of Max Ehrmann that whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul.

Finally, even if you remember not a single word of mine, please abide by Admiral. William Mc. Graven 10 rules:

1) Make your bed every morning

2) Find someone to help you paddle

3) Measure a person by the size of their hearts, not the size of their flippers

4) Keep moving forward, life is not fair

5) You will likely fail often, it is part of life.

6) Slide the obstacle, head first

7) Don't back down from the bullies

8) Step up when times are toughest

**9) Start singing when you are up to your neck in the
mud**

10) Never ever give up!

**Have the courage to follow your heart and shall be well
with you. Now go into the world in peace. Make**

**mistakes, break a few rules, push frontiers and leave
the world a better place than you found it.**

**May God bless you all, may He bless the University of
Nairobi and may He bless Kenya.**

DR. VIJOO RATTANSI, OGW,

CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

