



## **UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

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**REMARKS BY DR VIJOO RATTANSI, OGW, CHANCELLOR OF  
THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI DURING THE 51<sup>st</sup>  
GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON FRIDAY 29<sup>th</sup> AUGUST,  
2014 AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT**

**The Cabinet Secretary, Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi**

**Vice Chancellor, Prof. George Magoha**

**The Chairman of Council, Dr. Idle Farah Omar**

**Your Excellencies the Ambassadors & High Commissioners**

**Chancellors from other Universities**

**Donors**

**University Staff**

**Graduands**

**Students**

**Parents and guardians**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am delighted to celebrate with you all the great achievements of all upon whom today, we bestow the powers to read. If this were in ancient *luhya* land, the sounds of the *isikuti* would rent the air as the Council of *wasakhulus* slaughter only the finest *bull* to celebrate with us on this great day.

Graduands, many of you are living proof that it matters not how many storms you encounter, but rather that you land the ship safely. You have fought many battles throughout your education journey, many have suffered defeats. Yet by your presence here today, you are testament to the truth in the words of Confucius that “our greatest glory is not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall!”

**So it is with life!**

**In this congregation today are individuals, families and institutions that have over the years given generously to make this day possible. I invite you graduands to consider giving your time, resources and expertise in aid of the less fortunate in our society. No one has nothing to give. In fact, the world over, those who give the most have the least. If you mentor one person to stop drug abuse, if another sponsors a needy child through high school and another inspires a group of young delinquents away from crime, imagine the ripple societal effect that the 5,000 of us graduating today can inspire! The joy and satisfaction that**

**comes with seeing the results of such an investment of time, skill and money is immeasurable.**

**Through philanthropy work, I am aware of the difficulties around financing of higher education. Many of our resource challenged citizens still experience difficulties meeting their financial obligations. You will recall that in my 50<sup>th</sup> graduation speech I said that no child should be denied the opportunity to pursue higher education. My own research tells me that public universities elsewhere find ways of supplementing public funding through what they now call sustainability models. The time has come that we must leverage on the abundant knowledge we possess to expand our revenue base and develop an endowment fund for the**

**needy students. On his recent visit to the University, His Excellency the President Uhuru Kenyatta emphasised the role such endowments play in giving that extra sense of stability to institutions. I therefore request the Vice Chancellor to commission a special team to look into this matter.**

**Today you graduate at a time of great challenges to public universities. Across the world, universities are besieged with technological, demographic and economic forces which they can no longer ignore. Rising costs and reduced state funding remain real threats to the existence of public universities across the world. There is need to reduce over dependence**

**on state support which has been on the decline and will continue to decline.**

**Recently, I read a feature in the Economist titled “Universities of the Future.” This feature was largely on the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) being developed by top global universities. The aim is to deliver education to every household through ICT. This will enhance affordable education. It is predicted that as online education becomes more widespread, a college/university level education will soon be free (or cost just a minimal amount) for everyone in the world, and that the bachelor's degree will become irrelevant. While we are far from the dire situation in the global north, it is important that we begin to think about**

**creating our own local content if we will not be overrun by these institutions.**

**We thank the creation of Module II and the good work the entire business school lead by the able Dean Dr. Aduda is doing. I have singled out the Business School as during my visitation and my interaction with the university management and the Vice Chancellor, I noticed the Vice Chancellor always spoke and said the Business School was the financial backbone of the university. It gives me a lot of joy to see such passion and dedication in these “teaching and strategic gurus”. We thank you all from the bottom of our hearts.**



**All these statistics on online degrees point to the fact that our focus on Module 2 is not the solution to the long term sustainability of our universities. In fact, Module 2 blinds us to untapped opportunities and in some instances hurt the very purpose of our existence, research and knowledge advancement. To a large extent, Module 2 has not only created an imbalance between the faculty-to-student ratio which is key to quality education but also teaching and research. Top universities globally have an average faculty-to-student ratio of 1:7. Our University has an average faculty-to-student ratio of about 1:42. Looking to the future, we must lower this ratio to improve our quality and enhance our competitiveness.**

**For many years the University has basically been an ivory tower, a term used to designate a world or atmosphere where intellectuals engage in pursuits that are disconnected from the practical concerns of everyday life. Well, this is changing. Universities today take knowledge to the people and are part and parcel of the solution. I was recently privileged to be part of the University team that together with other stakeholders, educated the population in *Makueni* County on matters regarding the new constitution. I am also aware that some of our lecturers have pioneered ways of engaging with the public and jointly seeking solutions to the many societal problems. It is this sort of interaction between the Government, Universities and the private sector that**

**creates employment and wealth in many successful countries.**

**Over the past 8 months, I have had the opportunity to visit virtually all faculties of the University. I have been impressed with what I saw. Allow me therefore to take the earliest opportunity to commend you the Vice Chancellor, the faculty and the students for the good work you have done to improve our University. I saw many opportunities that we can exploit and be part of the solution to unemployment in the country.**

**We need to commercialize research output and create new industries that will employ our graduates.**

**We need to add value to our agricultural produce. We need to improve our post harvest management where research shows that about 30% of agricultural output is lost during this period. In a food insecure country like ours, this is unacceptable. I am encouraged that the College of Agriculture is pioneering many innovative ways of adding value to and securing our agricultural produce.**

**I am sure you are all aware of the Fabrication Laboratory at the School of Engineering that collaborates with MIT. I see this as a great opportunity to develop new machinery that can be used in manufacturing processes and mechanizing agriculture to create employment. It has the potential to upgrade our vast *jua kali* sectors to higher levels. You also**

**know about the C4D Lab in the School of Computing and Informatics that specializes in high quality and relevant ICT research and innovation to meet strategic development objectives of the government as enshrined in Vision 2030. There is opportunity to scale up this incubator program. ICT has revolutionized the way we do business in this country. Kenya today leads the world in mobile money. Take a minute to imagine a world without mobile money. By tapping into these two and similar initiatives, we the academic fraternity will play a more meaningful role in the country's economic development.**

**We must rethink governance of our universities. We must review our decisions on higher education, decisions which**

**have hitherto been guided by service to more people and addition of program offerings. We must infuse into the university culture a dash of business corporate culture. We must view the University as a business, a going concern whose governance must resonate with the best business practices and corporate governance ideals. I am aware that our able Vice Chancellor's current term is soon coming to an end. My prayer is that we will use this opportunity to expand the recruitment beyond our borders in line with our quest for world class standards. We will then in future follow the same self beaten path to attract the best minds on the continent to our shores.**

**It is said a painting is only as good as the canvas upon which it is cast. It is therefore important that we address the difficulties the university is experiencing if we are to make better graduates tomorrow.**

**Let me now finally address myself to the graduands, the reason why we are gathered here today.**

**We release you into an uncertain world. I am informed that the latest statistics from Commission for Higher Education tells us that every year our universities produce over 50,000 graduates. Kenya Bureau of Statistics tells us that the unemployment rate in Kenya as of 2011 was 40%. In short, the odds are stuck against you. Yet you must hope. Seek**

**comfort from the fact that you are no children of a lesser God. You were all created equal, endowed by the creator with certain inalienable rights...the right to life, to liberty and to pursue happiness. As Kenya's young Oscar Award Winning thespian Lupita Nyong'o would say, "YDV...Your dreams are valid."**

**Today you are graduates of some of the finest faculty on the planet. Prof. Richard Samson Odingo, we celebrate you. The late Prof. Wangari Maathai, we celebrate you. These two have put the University of Nairobi on the global map as Nobel laureates. As far back as the 1970s, great scholars like Messer's James Tobin and Joseph Stiglitz, both Nobel laureates in economics found a home at the University of**



**Nairobi. You therefore have all it takes to be all that you want to be. The question then should not be whether you will make it, but when you will make it. It does not matter how slow you go as long as you do not stop. Keep going... Think outside the box.**

**Have the courage to lose sight of the shore so as to explore new lands. Hold steadfast and exploit all opportunities availed to you; Youth Enterprise Fund, the Women Enterprise Fund, the Uwezo fund. Find out all you can about these opportunities and use them to your advantage. In the history of this nation never have so many expectations been placed on the shoulders of so few. Let this great lot of 2014 stand up and be counted.**

**Pool together like minds, create employment and create wealth. Let us reduce the *scramble for natural resources by creating a knowledge based economy*. Let us apply ourselves and our knowledge in solving the country's problems. Let the graduates of the School of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences pool together and start agricultural enterprises that will address the food insecurity in this country; Let the Biological and Physical Science graduates marshal together and inspire the health balance between humans and their environment; Let the School of Education and External Study Graduates close ranks and start model schools that will train and empower Kenyans who will compete against the best in any corner of the globe and not come up short; Let the Architects and Engineers engage each other and**

**design and build for us skyscrapers taller than the 163 storey Burj Khalifa in Dubai and bridges longer than the 42.5 Kilometre Quindao Haiwan Bridge in China. I have no doubt that you will do it but only if you choose to.**

**So today we celebrate you men and women, first time graduands and advance degree graduands. Members of both teaching and non teaching fraternity and university administration, we know that none of this would have been possible without you. We celebrate you. The *mama mboga* and the tuck shopseller, the taxi driver, the newspaper, student mess and airtime vendors who contributed in whichever small way to getting the grandaunds this far, we celebrate you. The government for sponsoring many of the**

**students here through HELB and funding for recurrent expenditure, we are grateful. Finally, parents and guardians without whose sacrifice of both time and resources most of us would never have been here today, we celebrate you.**

**Graduands, remember that education is light. May you never extinguish it. Finally, as the late Dr. Griffin would have said on this day,**

**“Go forth into the world in peace; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no man evil for evil; strengthen the faint-hearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour all men”**

**If you do this my dear children, I assure you like the good book does, you will renew your strength; you will soar on wings like eagles; you will walk and not be faint; you will run and not grow weary.**

**Thank you. God bless you, God bless Kenya and God bless our university.**