



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH BY PROF. GEORGE A.O. MAGOHA, VICE-
CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI DURING
THE 51ST GRADUATION CEREMONY ON AUGUST 29,
2014 AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT at 9.00 AM.**

- **Cabinet Secretary, Education, Science & Technology**
- **Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi**
- **Your Excellencies the Ambassadors & High Commissioners**
- **Chancellors of Sister Universities**
- **Chairman, University of Nairobi Council, Dr. I. Farah**
- **Members of the University of Nairobi Council**
- **Chairpersons of other University Councils**
- **Vice-Chancellor's of sister Universities**

- **Deputy Vice-Chancellors**
- **College Principals**
- **University of Nairobi Senate**
- **Parents and Guardians**
- **Graduands**
- **Staff**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the University of Nairobi and in particular to the 51st congregation of the University of Nairobi.

This is my 19th graduation ceremony as Vice-Chancellor, representing 37% of all graduation ceremony since the inception of the University of Nairobi 51 years ago. In December this year, we will be holding another graduation ceremony making it my 20th representing 38% of graduation ceremonies of the University of Nairobi.

I also take this opportunity to congratulate the graduands for their hard work, without which, this occasion would not have taken place.

Madam Chancellor, this congregation is featuring graduands from the Colleges of: Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, Engineering and Architecture, Biological and Physical Sciences, and Education and External Studies. From a professional perspective, the congregation is graduating Engineers, Architects, Valuers, Quantity Surveyors, Designers, Veterinary Doctors, Agriculturists, Actuarists, Statisticians,

Physical and Biological science specialists and teachers among others.

The graduates are being passed out at different levels comprising of 19 PhDs, 651 Masters, 2877 Bachelors, 32 Postgraduate Diplomas and 1508 Ordinary diplomas. This number adds upto the more than 156,000 graduates of the past 50 congregations making the University of Nairobi the largest single contributor to the human resource capacity of the country.

Reflecting over the past 10 years we have graduated 80,737 comprising: 3 earned DScs, and five Honorary degrees to the following: the late Wangari Muta Maathai, Doctor of Science (DSc); Hon. Mwai Kibaki, Doctor of Laws (LLD), Hon. Raila Odinga, Doctor of Laws, Hon. Kofi Annan, Doctor of Laws (LLD); John Nyangeri Simba, Doctor of Laws (LLD); 372 PhDs, 13,389 Masters, and many bachelors and diplomas.

Thus our contribution to capacity building for realizing development needs of the country and worldwide, can be felt through the number of quality

graduates. These graduands were tutored and mentored by highly qualified staff comprising of 146 Professors, 276 Associate Professors, of the over 1700 qualified academic staff. These staff have been responsible for teaching, research and dissemination of their academic work, and I am proud to have worked with them for the last ten years despite many challenges. Indeed through our combined efforts, we have managed to grow our research fund to over KES 3.5 billion annually and our scientists are winning prizes worldwide.

Madam Chancellor, I am happy to inform this Congregation, that the University of Nairobi has been confirmed by the recent web-ranking as the gold standard of not only the region but sub-Saharan Africa, out of South Africa, after emerging in position 9 out of 1307 Universities in Africa ahead of all regional universities for the second time in six months. It was also ranked worldwide at position 907 out of over 22,000 Universities, an improvement by 419 places from its previous rank. Indeed only universities from South Africa and Egypt were ahead of us. This performance Madam Chancellor is a

climax of the great academic work by our staff and students thus raising visibility of the University worldwide. It also vindicates the systems we have consciously put in place for the last 10 years which are now bearing fruit. This improved performance is a build up to other excellent results that we have recorded in the past especially in performance contracting. Currently, the University of Nairobi holds the Excellent rank in the public sector performance contracting, a standing that has never been attained by any public entity since the introduction of public sector reforms, over 10 years

ago. On behalf of the University Senate, I take this opportunity to congratulate our staff and students for the good showing and urge them to improve on these standards.

Allow me at this juncture to sincerely thank the President of Kenya, His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta who just early this week laid the Foundation Stone for the University of Nairobi Towers. It was truly a great honour to receive His Excellency; a man who I believe is approachable, direct and keeps his word. Kenya can only benefit from his amiable character

and clear understanding of development issues. During his visit, the President noted that the Towers were an amazing reflection of the position of the University of Nairobi as the leader in architectural thought, innovation and champion towards the provision of environmentally friendly solutions. This is indeed an affirmation that the University is on the right course to world class excellence.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to acknowledge those who have mentored me and thus contributed to the improved performance of the University. I

particularly wish to acknowledge Mr. John Nyangeri Simba, Chairman of Council between 2005 and 2012; Dr. Joseph Wanjui, Chancellor, 2003-2013; Further, I wish to thank Dr. Vijoo Rattansi and Dr. Idle Farah, who are my current mentors. Honorable Chancellor, and Chairman of Council, I will appreciate new direction in sustaining our performance as a University, as we strive for Excellence in service delivery, innovation and development.

Madam Chancellor this year, the University has continued to build on the gains of the previous years.

Worth mentioning is the mature conduct of affairs between staff and student unions on one hand and management on the other. Not only has these led to a better working environment for the benefit of all of us, it has also led to better resolution of our differences. As a spin off on this constructive engagement, I am happy to report that our unions are now engaging in corporate social responsibility activities to support worthy causes within the University. Early this month, management received a contribution from the Kenya Universities Staff Union (KUSU) leaders towards payment of fees for

needy and deserving students. I urge other unions to emulate this good spirit because unionism is about brotherhood.

Ladies and gentlemen, respect and order is the foundation for running successful organizations all over the world. I was the first Vice-Chancellor among public universities to be hired through a rigorous competitive process which has been adopted by sister universities and sectors of the public sector. When I took over as Vice-Chancellor, University financial accounts were five years behind and title

deeds for University property missing. I wish to report that our accounts over the last ten years are up to date, published and open for public scrutiny further we have secured 23 out of 27 land title deeds. We are on course in pursuing the remaining 4 title deeds.

In my tenure, we have had unfortunate incidents involving sections of members of the University community, but we have embraced the culture of accommodation, securing more support for our cause and protecting the corporate image of our

institution. Occasionally, when unions have grievances, we have had formal activities within the institution grounded unnecessarily, even where the matter is external to the University. I believe therefore that it is a principle of natural justice that while enjoying your rights, you should not hinder others from enjoying theirs. It is my humble request that when observing your fundamental rights, allow others to enjoy theirs as well. Let us all embrace dialogue so that we can resolve problems amicably. I would like to commend SONU Vice-Chairman, Irene Kendi on her recent award as Africa's most

innovative female student leader. This is an example of transformative student leadership impacting on a positive gender and youth policy for Kenya.

In the last month Madam Chancellor, you have been taken around on a familiarization tour of the University. You experienced firsthand, the facilities of this great University. While most of the facilities are up to date, a lot more needs to be done on others. New facilities need to be put up literally everywhere to cope with the rising demand for our services. To meet this demand, we have invested over KES 3

Billion in constructing new facilities and completed the ones that had stalled in the 1990s. This investment is expected to increase by KES 2.5 Billion if we factor in the completion of the ongoing construction of the University towers and a further over KES 800 million if we consider the ongoing projects at the College of Health Sciences and Kisumu Campus. However, for this University to have capacity to absorb the increasing need for higher education in the country, more facilities are required to support academic and social welfare of our students. The University intends to increase the

number of bed-space by engaging private developers through the public-private-partnerships and put up hostels within the vicinity of our various campuses to comfortably accommodate more student numbers.

The University has become more aggressive in fundraising to support infrastructural projects. In this regard, the University Community is grateful to the positive reaction to our efforts, particularly from the leading industrialist and Philanthropist, Dr. Manu Chandaria, who has contributed KES 50 million through the Chandaria Foundation to support the ongoing construction of the 22-floor University

towers. The Chandaria Foundation will be recognized by naming the Centre for Performing Arts after the Chandaria Foundation. My humble appeal goes to organizations and benevolent Kenyans to support the University in building its capacity in offering higher education.

I am also grateful to the government for ensuring that the University meets its financial obligations particularly in the recent Collective Bargaining Agreement that was due to our members of staff for the last two financial years. I will be grateful if the

government facilitates the return of money in 100 of millions received (erringly) by a number of University Colleges and yet to be refunded. The Government intervention is crucial because the monies were budgeted for by the University of Nairobi for purposes of the same Collective Bargaining Agreement.

My humble request to the government, as the biggest benefactor among the public universities is that they consider increasing capitation to the University of Nairobi to at least cater for the payroll, and free funds generated from income generating activities,

which are mainly used to supplement the payroll, to be used to fund development projects.

Today belongs to our graduands, without whom, this ceremony would not have been possible. They will be joining over 156,000 alumni who have successfully proven the quality of the University of Nairobi brand. I am therefore requesting you to be our worthy ambassadors in the market and you are welcome to join us again for more education and also in our Alumni Association to help in building this

institution. I wish you success in all your future endeavors.

With those remarks, it is now my pleasure to welcome the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Science and Technology to address you.

Thank you.