



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. G.A.O.
MAGOHA DURING THE 49TH GRADUATION CEREMONY
ON AUGUST 23, 2013 AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT**

Secretary, Ministry of Education

Chancellor, University of Nairobi

Principal Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology

Chancellors of Sister Universities

Your excellencies, the Ambassadors and high commissioners

Chairman, University of Nairobi Council

Chairpersons of University Councils

Vice-Chancellor's of sister Universities

Deputy Vice-Chancellors

College Principals and Senate

Graduands, Parents and Guardians

Staff, Students

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you to this auspicious occasion of the 49th Graduation Ceremony of the University of Nairobi. It is a momentous day as we witness 5,341 graduands being crowned with different degrees and diplomas in various specializations. Congratulations to the graduands.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the graduands before you this morning consist of students from the colleges of: Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, Architecture and Engineering, Biological and Physical Sciences, and Education and External Studies. These four colleges are presenting 5,342 graduands which include 1 DSc, 21 PhDs, 815 Masters and over 3,000 Bachelor degrees. These graduands consist of top notch professionals among them engineers, architects, building and

construction professionals, veterinary surgeons, actuaries, agriculturists, scientists, surveyors and teachers among others who have been well prepared through course work, examination, dissertations, thesis and practical attachment, to participate in the onerous task of nation building. The remaining two colleges of: Health Sciences and Humanities and Social Sciences will constitute the 50th congregation to be held in the first week of December, 2013.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to clarify reports that appeared in sections of the local media castigating the quality of postgraduate students from local universities. The University of Nairobi which is the gold standard of this country, affirms to our stakeholders, and particularly to employers that our graduates have

been properly tutored and examined as per the University regulations and remain competitive even when they venture for further studies and assignments in top international universities and organizations, respectively. In this University, postgraduate research work undergoes a rigorous vetting exercise by internal and external examiners, hence ensuring that only original work by students is passed. This procedure upholds our standards and the integrity of our academic processes. Furthermore, we recently launched a plagiarism policy which will further streamline academic quality at this University.

Mr Chancellor, Sir, research remains pivotal in institutions of higher learning and I am happy to report that this University has provided leadership in

collaborative research with other organizations. This has not only increased our research output but also student and staff exchange through linkages which has been on a steady increase. The upsurge in research activities, form the basis of our rich curricula and can further be attested by our research portfolio currently standing at over KES 3 billion annually and projected to grow further. I wish to strongly commend our academic staff for this noble effort and in particular researchers from the College of Health Sciences for being responsible for 73 percent of this research fund. I urge staff from other colleges to emulate this example.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the increased research activities and quality of our academic activities is also

reflected in our standing in the webometric rankings where the University of Nairobi has steadily maintained its leading position in the country, and has remained among the top in the region and in Africa. In the latest rankings of August, 2013 we retained position one nationally and 14 in Africa out of 974 Universities. We are optimistic that, we will improve our ranking to be among the top 10 universities in Africa within the next 12 months. Indeed, to confirm our quality in many aspects, top regional universities have been sending their managers to learn from our reforms and to benchmark with our systems.

All these has happened over the past 10 years because the Government of Kenya gave us the autonomy to run the Universities with good cooperate governance and

private sector culture without undue interference while still exercising oversight functions. We wish to thank the Government most sincerely for this freedom because the results of this governance practice have been demonstrated to all.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the University of Nairobi has fast tracked the admission of government sponsored students, popularly known as regular students, to reduce the time lag between KCSE examinations and when they join the University. For example, the KCSE 2011 group joined in May 2013 instead of the traditional September, the 2012 KCSE group will join in January 2014, while the 2013 KCSE group will join in September 2014. This development will hence-forth

align our intake for government sponsored students with the best practices worldwide.

To cope with the accelerated intake, increased overall admissions and academic activities in the University, management is increasing physical facilities campus wide. The latest effort is the ongoing construction of the 22-storey University of Nairobi towers at the Main Campus, which will house academic and administrative activities. I want to thank the Chandaria group for committing to contribute KES 125 million to this project and also urge other philanthropists to come forward and donate to this project. There is also the ongoing construction of the School of Pharmacy Complex at the College of Health Sciences at Kenyatta National Hospital, and the expansion of Kisumu

campus which houses the Schools of Law, Business and Education. On completion, these facilities will greatly reduce the problem of adequate learning space that we are experiencing in our quest to increase access to quality higher education to deserving Kenyans. These facilities are in addition to projects worth KES 2.5 billion completed in the last 10 years.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the University of Nairobi has been on government support of about 38 percent of its budget over the last 10 years. Operationally, this has been challenging forcing the University to supplement its payroll to the tune of KES 2.8 billion, from income generating activities particularly Module II programs. This supplementation occasions the diversion of funds that would otherwise be used for development and

research activities. My appeal to the good government of Kenya, through our parent ministry, is to increase funding to at least cater for the payroll so that the University can meet academic endeavours including research with funds from income generating activities and collaborators.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to thank the government of His Excellency, Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta for honouring its promise to implement phase II of the collective bargaining agreement signed between the university councils and the unions last year. The settlement of salary and house allowance arrears, helped in averting industrial unrest that was threatening to disrupt our academic activities. In the same vein, I would like to commend the unions for

embracing dialogue as the administration and the government sought a solution to the problem and I urge them to continue with the same spirit. I note with appreciation that our union chapters have refused to be incited by enemies of this University. It is my considered opinion that people should be judged by the results of what they do and not what they say. At this University we have been trained to serve God and our country. We will remain loyal to the government as this University is a state agency.

I also wish to congratulate Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi on his appointment as the Cabinet Secretary in charge of Education. Prior to his appointment Prof. Kaimenyi was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Affairs for

nine years. We wish him well as he steers the education sector to new heights of success.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, I am happy to report that the University is committed to assist the government in its development agenda. Apart from providing quality human resource, we have embarked on activities among them a Rapid Results Initiative in conjunction with the Commission for the Implementation of the Constitution (CIC) and the Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (EACC), to sensitize students, staff, alumni and the general public on the Constitution and the Public Service Integrity Programme. Through this sensitization programme, it is expected that the University community will take the initiative to fully understand our constitution and other issues of

governance in order to be empowered to contribute positively towards the development of the nation. It is our hope that when the constitution is fully understood and strictly adhered to, Kenya will be a better place to for us all.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today is also a special day for our new Council Chairman Dr. Idle Omar Farah. Dr. Farah is a veterinary surgeon with a PhD in Comparative Medicine from the University of Uppsala in Sweden. He has been a member of the University Council since 2005. Dr. Farah has been the Director General of the National Museums General since 2003. He has also served as a member of the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) now Commission for University Education (CUE). Dr. Farah is an active researcher with

35 peer-reviewed journal publications to his credit, mainly on primate research and has supervised Masters and PhD students in Sweden, the United Kingdom and Kenya. On behalf of the entire University community I take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Farah on his most deserving appointment and wish him a successful tenure at the helm of the University council.

I also wish to most sincerely thank his predecessor, Dr. John Nyangeri Simba, for his very able stewardship of the Council from 2005 to early this year, during which period, the University realized steady and exponential growth. We wish him success on his new and well deserved appointment as the Chancellor of Pwani University.

This ceremony ladies and gentlemen, also marks our farewell to our Chancellor, Dr. Joseph Barrage Wanjui, who has been the head and face of the University for the last 10 years. Indeed he was the first non-head of state to become the Chancellor of the University of Nairobi after reforms in higher education in 2003.

The next section of my speech therefore will be devoted to Dr. Joseph Wanjui, the man, who helped to anchor the University to unprecedented 10 years of development during which period, he earned nothing as he diverted all his allowances to Dr. Joe B. Wanjui Education Trust that supports the girl child education in universities.

When he was first appointed Chancellor, I was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Administration and Finance. The situation at the University at that time was chaotic, with rampant student indiscipline, low staff morale, poor infrastructure and high indebtedness of the University to the tune of KES 3 billion.

His arrival signaled a change in management style and his vow "that the status quo was not an option" ushered the rebirth of the University of Nairobi. As a reflection of this change, most University meetings now commence as early as 7.00 a.m and most staff complete their tasks ahead of schedule. This good cooperate governance and culture has now become a way of life at this University.

After 10 years at the helm, his leadership has made an indelible mark on the University of Nairobi. Student enrolment doubled from 30,000 in 2004 to the current 63,500. Alumni have increased to over 151,000 up from 80,000 in 2004. This means that Dr. Joseph Barage Wanjui has graduated 70,000 graduates in 18 graduation ceremonies representing 47 percent of all graduates at the University since his inauguration as Chancellor 10 years ago. When he took over, about 4,000 students graduated annually but now we are graduating over 13,000 students with a record number of 79 PhDs and over 3,000 Masters degrees being recorded in the last congregation.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the University asset base has experienced an exponential growth and now stands at KES 102 billion up from KES 10 billion ten years ago. This is due to Dr Wanjui's prudent management style which emphasized that only professional accountants should manage University finances. He insisted on the operationalization of the audit committee of Council which, during his tenure, was chaired by professional accountants who were members of Council. The members included Mr. Terry Robinson, Mr. Isaac Awoundo and lately, Mr. Kitili Mbathi. The result of this has been a phenomenal growth in our budget from KES 6 billion in 2004/05 to over KES 18 billion this financial year, representing a 300 percent growth.

The same can be said of the pension scheme which was streamlined during his tenure. In 2004 the University of Nairobi Pension scheme had a fund value of KES 2.3 billion and the UoN was indebted to the Fund at the tune of KES 1 billion. The debt has since been repaid in full and remittances are effected on time. Currently the Fund value stands at a staggering KES 9.7 billion. Over the past two years, dividends to members have been at the level of 20 percent. It is proper to attribute this phenomenal growth to the outgoing Chancellor.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in regard to infrastructure, Dr. Wanjui's leadership has enabled the University to complete stalled projects and initiate and complete new ones at an estimated cost of KES 3 billion. Each

college campus now boasts projects that have been completed in recent years while expansion and acquisition of properties in Mombasa and Kisumu have strengthened our presence in these regions.

Furthermore, his tenure will be remembered for conceptualization, initiation and the construction of the 22-storey University Towers worth over KES 2.5 billion at the main campus. The towers will be critical for increased University activities and redefine the Nairobi skyline. It is extremely important for the public to appreciate that all these infrastructural projects have been funded through prudent utilization of internally generated funds and support from collaborators.

His contributions to reforming public affairs include the introduction of competitive hiring in the public sector, of which I became the first Vice-Chancellor to be appointed competitively. This process has been cascaded to all other positions and is now widely practiced in government to identify leaders for various sectors and has become government policy and the law.

The University of Nairobi community will forever celebrate Dr. Wanjui's achievements and wish him well as he embarks on his other interests. The challenge for Council and Senate of this University is to manage succession in such a way that we remain at the top.

As I conclude my remarks, I would like to remind the congregation that the number of alumni has surpassed

the 150,000 mark and now stands at 151,300. My request, as we mark this milestone, is to request you to join the Alumni Association and participate actively in support of the University.

I thank you all and wish you well in your endeavours.