



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR GEORGE A.
MAGOHA, VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF
NAIROBI, DURING THE 33rd GRADUATION
CEREMONY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
HELD ON FRIDAY 14TH OCTOBER, 2005 AT THE
CHANCELLOR'S COURT**

Minister for Education, Science and Technology,

**The Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Dr. J.B.
Wanjui**

**Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education
Science & Technology, Prof. Karega Mutahi**

Chancellor of other Universities

**The Chairman of the University Council, Mr. John
Simba**

Members of the University of Nairobi Council

Vice-Chancellors of other Universities

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Deputy Vice-Chancellors of the UON

Principals of Colleges

**Deans of Faculties and Directors of Institutes and
Centres**

Chairmen and Heads of Department

Graduands

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I wish to take this opportunity to warmly welcome you all to the University of Nairobi. I also wish to congratulate the graduands for their achievement and to also thank the graduands' parents, guardians, friends and all those who played a role in ensuring that you were facilitated to complete

your course. This of course is the first for the two graduations this year, for the colleges of Architecture and Engineering, Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences and Biological and Physical Sciences. The second graduation for the three remaining colleges will be held on the 9th of December 2005 in line with our new strategic thinking.

Ladies and gentlemen, the University of Nairobi has a long tradition of providing quality and relevant education that meets the needs of our great Nation in terms of providing highly trained

personnel. University of Nairobi has trained many engineers, architects, doctors, teachers, scientists of all kinds, diplomats, journalists among others, who have gone ahead to occupy respectable and critical positions in both the public and private sector. Our graduates are found in every sector of the economy and industry and these men and women, every passing day, determine national policy and events that affect the lives of millions of our citizens. The University of Nairobi is extremely proud of its above achievement and is determined to continue playing its critical role in

the provision of needed trained manpower to run our economy.

It is for the above reason, that the University places a lot of emphasis on its Alumni. The University of Nairobi alumni Association was launched early this year with the aim of tapping its over 80,000 graduates, whose skills, experience, advice and assistance would go along way in assisting the University meets its mission and objectives. The Chairperson of the Alumni Association, Dr. Betty Gikonyo will shortly give you an overview of the Association and its

entrenchment in University Management organs in view of its centrality in the running of the University. To emphasize the absolute significance and lasting nature of the Alumni Association, effective next year, all graduands will become ordinary members as part of the graduation and branding process upon fulfilling certain requisite conditions.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the theme for this year's graduation ceremony is "towards world-class excellence". The University, following its proclamation that it has embarked on a new era, is

now determined to find its place among other top class Universities. According to the World's universalities ranking on the web, University of Nairobi remains the premier University in Kenya and is in position 24 among the first one hundred universities in Africa. We consider this a reasonable achievement within our current strategic objectives, which we will definitely improve on in future. In this regard, wit effect from the new financial year, the University wil emphasize more on innovative research and will establish a research vote in every academic

department. Websites will be opened for all departments and academic research output reviewed and updated yearly.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, let me also take this opportunity yet again to challenge businessmen to invest in the University to support research and infrastructure. University of Nairobi cannot and should not be regarded solely as a public institution to be funded only by the government as in the past.

The University of Nairobi is determined to ensure that it continues to provide quality and relevant

programmes. Programmes that will in the end help Kenyans and the world at large, to overcome the many social, economic and political challenges that mankind faces in their quest for a better life. To make it be a world-class Institution of higher learning, the University has to contend with and overcome a number of challenges that have in the recent years constrained it in meeting its objectives.

The University of Nairobi is responding to these challenges in a number of ways. To begin with, the University of Nairobi has adopted the practice of

filling its top managerial positions through competitive processes. So far, the office of the Vice-Chancellor, that of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Administration and Finance) and that of the Principal, College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences have been filled through this process. I am proud to state that of all the public universities, University of Nairobi was the first University to initiate this process and so far continues to be the only one that has adopted this business like approach. The positive effect of this system has begun to bear fruit. The inner energy

of the University is being revitalized and is being realized as staff and students are rising up to the challenge of transforming the University to greater heights.

For the first time since its inception, the University of Nairobi now has a five-year corporate strategic plan 2005-2010 in place. This plan forms the basis for the performance contract between the University council and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology on one hand and between the Vice-Chancellor and the University Council on the other hand. The aim of

the performance contract is to ensure that the University and its chief officers meet the set targets as indicated in its strategic plan and also, for effective and efficient delivery of services to its clients, to the government, the community and to other stakeholders. I wish to affirm that the contract was signed on the 30th of June 2005 at 11.45 a.m. and is in force. Mr. Chancellor Sir, I am glad to report that the University of Nairobi Performance report for the 1st quarter of the 2005/2006 financial year was submitted to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology on

schedule on the 11th of October 2005 with all quarterly targets met.

In our endeavour to ensure that customer service improves in a defined and structured manner, the University has produced a Service Charter that provides guidelines on the kind of service on offer in all units. Service to its public will from henceforth be timely, concise, precise and of high quality as is expected. The Charter, which is a commitment on the part of the University to provide quality services within specific time frames, should be seen as a covenant between the

University and its various publics. The public is therefore urged to demand for and to receive quality and timely service.

With regard to leadership, the university is currently training its management officers in a bid to inculcate in the management skills in areas such as Human Resource, Financial Management, ICT, change management, among others. So far the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Principals of College, other members of University Management Board, Deans of faculties and Directors of Institutes have gone through the

rigorous training. The chairmen of Academic departments and other Heads of Departments and other Heads of Departments are scheduled to be similarly trained within the next one month. The said training will trickle down to the lowest cadre of staff in the University. Specific performance targets will then be set as benchmarks for all Managers, teaching and support staff. Staff performance appraisal exercise, will concentrate on these targets, and staff deemed to be not meeting the set targets will be rationalized and right sized.

In order to ensure that quality teaching takes place at the University, Lecturers are now being trained on pedagogical skills. In this regard the first batch from the departments of Geography and Environmental Studies, Communications Skills and French have already been trained with very good results. Quality will thus continue to be the hallmark of the University of Nairobi service.

To further ensure that quality programmes and services are being delivered, as we embark on the route towards world-class excellence, the university is currently restructuring its managerial

and administrative organs. Departments and Faculties have either been collapsed, merged or rationalised with the sole purpose of ensuring quality academic service, minimizing expenses and further to ensure that previous bureaucracy in the delivery of services is history. Courses at the University have also been refined and reorganised to be in tune with current developments world-wide. We are strengthening our Open Learning Centres to bring education to the homes of Kenyans. We want to ensure that education is

available, accessible and affordable to every Kenyan who is in need of the same.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the greatest challenge facing the University today is financial. The shrinking revenue from the government in the form of capitation coupled with raising payroll expenditure, escalating debt and deficits are realities the University has to contend with. We highly appreciate the government's efforts in the provision of the needed funds in face of the hard economic times facing our beloved country. Indeed, we acknowledge with gratitude the recent

and timely assistance from the government to the tune of Kshs972 million to offset the debt owed to the Kenya Revenue Authority as a result of chronic insufficient funding. The recent allocation by the Kenya government of the former Kenya School of Law to the University of Nairobi, Faculty of Dental Sciences also palpably demonstrates the government's continued eager and sincere wish to assist the University. The University management is still eagerly awaiting government assistance with regard to the completion of various stalled projects. Completion of these stalled projects.

Completion of these stalled projects will increase and improve the much-needed capacity within the University. On its part, the University continues to generate its own internal funds through the Module II academic programmes and other income generating projects, so as to supplement the shortfall. A lot more still needs to be done. Our urgent plea to the Government is to give the University Council autonomy to manage Module II academic programmes within the University Act.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, these programmes now generate about 2 billion shillings yearly out of

which about 800 million shillings is utilised to supplement government capitations in order for staff salaries and statutory deductions to be paid timely. You will recall Mr. Chancellor Sir, the over seven hundred million shillings for module II academics programmes have been utilised to complete and equip a substantial number of stalled projects in all the six colleges.

I would like at this juncture to sincerely thank the University Academic Staff Union (UASU) Nairobi Chapter for their direct contribution to the running of the University. This is because the

Module II academic programmes are run by UASU members most of the time between 5.00 p.m. and 9.00 p.m. on working days and on Saturdays when they are supposed to be off-duty. The significance of this Mr. Chancellor Sir, is what we have continued to utilise available physical resources maximally to carry out the mission and vision of the University for the benefit of all stakeholders.

However, to further assist the University in this area, the defective, inefficient and insufficient unit cost that is insensitive to the different academic

programmes being offered at the University must be thought-out afresh. The University has already presented its proposal on revised unit cost to the government and it is hoped that the recommendations contained therein regarding differentiated unit cost will be approved in due course. This will go a long way in alleviating the University's financial condition. The University will of course continue to raise its own funds and with the reorganization of the University of Nairobi Enterprises and Services (UNES), with more emphasis on consultancies and non-academic

programmes, it is envisaged that our revenues base will improved. We shall also strictly adhere to the approved budget and void unnecessary over-expenditure, as was the case in the past.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, you must have observed the relative calm that is at the University at the moment. In the past, academic programmes were disrupted unnecessarily as a result of riots and strikes orchestrated by students for reasons that were essentially external to the University. I would wish at this juncture, to congratulate and commend the student population for the mature

manner in which they have carried themselves throughout the now ended academic year. This year has witnessed and continues to witness, intense political events throughout the country. In the past, events such as the now heated constitution debate, would be recipe for chaos at the University, leading to riots and ultimate closure of the University with the attendant disruption of the academic calendar and the bad image that the University now bears. It is commendable that despite incitement from many quarters the student population have resisted

being drawn into the seemingly endless fights that have characterized these debates. I must at this point also commend the student organization body, SONU, for the responsible manner in which they have led their constituents. SONU has been at the forefront in holding consultation with University Management whenever issues of mutual concern arise. Cases of student indiscipline are on the decline.

However, the few who hve broken the law have been dealt wit in accordance iwththe laws of the land and in line with the rules nad regulations that

govern the conduct of students. Let me reiterate, Ladies and Gentlemen that the University Management is committed to encouraging dialogue. The University will thus continue to revise its programmes, improves its facilities, recruit quality staff, train these staff further, pursue policies that are in tandem with developments elsewhere in the world, manage its funds prudently, and in a nut shell, carry out its mission and objectives and fulfil its mandate. We shall not relent in our pursuit for excellence. We

shall remain committed to the cause. We shall succeed.

Let me now thank you once again Mr. Chancellor Sir, for having graced this occasion. Your support for the University is invaluable and is much appreciated. We have all the confidence that our energy will enable us overcome our many challenges and enable us attain the world-class status that the University desires. We shall then be able to produce branded graduates that we shall all be proud of.

Thank you.

