



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. GEORGE
A.O. MAGOHA DURING THE 38TH GRADUATION
CEREMONY AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT ON
FRIDAY DECEMBER 7, 2007**

The Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Dr. Joseph

Barrage Wanjui

Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Prof.

Karega Mutahi

Chairman, University of Nairobi Council, Mr. John

Simba

Members of the University of Nairobi Council

Vice-Chancellors of our sister universities

Deputy Vice-Chancellors, University of Nairobi

Principals of Colleges

Deans and Directors

Chairmen and Heads of Departments

Parents/Guardians

Graduands and students

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to warmly welcome you all to the University of Nairobi and to the 38th Graduation Ceremony of the University of Nairobi. I would like to heartily congratulate all the graduands for their hard work, parents and guardians for the sacrifices made and the lecturers for spending their time in nurturing the graduands to complete their studies successfully and timely.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this is the second graduation ceremony to be held this year and will present graduands mainly from the Colleges of Health Sciences, Humanities and Social Sciences and

Education and External Studies, Bachelor of Education Science graduates. The remaining three Colleges constituted the 37th graduation ceremony which was held in September 2007. A total of 3,618 students will today be conferred with various awards broken down to 210 Diplomas, 2,606 Bachelors, 72 Postgraduate Diplomas, 712 Masters and 18 Ph.Ds. We have however allowed all completed Ph.Ds to graduate irrespective of their College of origin.

These graduates include 332 medical doctors, 78 pharmacists, 33 dental surgeons and 296 lawyers among others. Of special interest is the five Ph.Ds

from the School of Business. I sincerely hope that this trend in the School of Business will continue.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the University community has continued to embrace discipline. This has not only improved its corporate image, but has also endeared most of our students to future employers. Barclays Bank for example will consider 50 of today's graduands for employment and sponsor several Ph.D. students in business related areas. To buttress this point, our students under the leadership of SONU, recently hosted CEOs of leading companies to a cocktail at the University. This is a big achievement

bearing in mind the frosty relations that existed between students and our external publics only three years ago. To cement this newfound relationship, I call upon industry to embrace our graduates, who have demonstrated a complete transformation in their conduct and should therefore be given their fair and rightful place in our society.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, during the 37th graduation ceremony, I informed you about the launch of the Rapid Results Initiative (RRI) which forms part of the wider public sector reforms. Today, I am happy to report that the first phase of the reforms have

successfully been completed and we officially unveiled the achievements last week in a ceremony officiated by the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Prof. Karega Mutahi. Several successes were attained in this first phase among them: Processing of transcripts within two days down from the previous two weeks; procurement turnaround time reduced by 75 per cent, by eliminating bottlenecks in the process; student clearance now to take a maximum of two days. Cost reduction in our stores has also been achieved as well as improved utilization of ICT facilities to enhance internal communication. Also set to improve is the

communication between lecturers and students. Our staff appraisal instrument has been revised and the new one will be implemented during this year's exercise. The University is set to embark on the second phase of RRI in January 2008, to build on the momentum and achievements of the first phase.

To improve service delivery Ladies and Gentlemen, the University management has embarked on a rigorous training exercise that involves all cadres of staff. The intention is to prepare and inculcate members of staff with customer expectations. Academic staff from colleges of Humanities and Social Sciences, Biological and Physical Sciences and

Architecture and Engineering have been trained in pedagogical skills. The remaining colleges will undergo the same training before the end of the current financial year. Administrative, technical and support staff have also been exposed to various quality management skills, all meant to improve service delivery.

Ladies and Gentlemen, no institution of higher learning can lay claim to academic leadership without a vibrant research programme. The University of Nairobi still maintains leadership in this area with a research fund of over Kshs.600

million in this year's budget. Out of this figure, Kshs. 100 million is an allocation by the University Council, from our internal resources, while the government through the Commission for Higher Education (CHE) donated Kshs.15 million. The remaining funds were sourced from our international research collaborators by the academic staff. Indeed, our research policy does not advocate over reliance on government funding but rather encourages scholars to source for funding through local and international collaborators. Through this effort, the University has managed to raise over Kshs.0.5 billion to fund its research activities. The University is

encouraging more scholars to network with research collaborators in order to boost our research fund. This fund is not enough for a University of our size, and I am appealing yet again to industry and other organizations to sponsor or undertake joint research ventures with the University. I wish to specifically recognize the Gandhi Smarak Nithi Fund for sponsoring 50 postgraduate students this year, and for yearly providing a gold medal to the best overall student at the University over the past 15 years. They are represented in the University Council by Industrialist Entrepreneur, Dr. Manu Chandaria.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, local universities have been challenged by the government and other stakeholders to expand access to higher education to many deserving Kenyans. To attain this objective, the University has to expand its infrastructure to accommodate more numbers. We are grateful to the government for elevating the former Kenya Science Teachers College into a campus of the University of Nairobi. In October this year, we admitted 180 B.Ed. Science students. We are equally grateful that the Kenya Polytechnic University College is a constituent College of UoN, with eventual elevation to full fledged University status. Through our own

resources, management has increased enrolment of students by commencing Bachelor of Commerce and MBA courses at the Kisumu campus. The Mombasa Campus will be expanded through the purchase of another facility where programmes of humanities and social sciences, education and external studies and biological and physical Sciences will be taught. Although we are currently offering courses in these regions, our capacity is limited and demand has been outstripped by the limited facilities. The School of Computing and Informatics is scheduled for a further expansion to accommodate more ICT hardware and

provide more room for additional training in computer studies to Ph.D. level.

In addition to increasing access to university education, management has completed various stalled projects. For instance, this financial year at the lower Kabete Campus, a modern library, a lecture theatre and academic staff offices have been completed at a cost of Ksh.32 million. Next financial year, we shall complete the hostels at Lower Kabete. At Chiromo Campus, the ongoing work at the central examinations centre are set for completion in January 2008. Other projects that have been

completed include the ICT network expansion to the College of Health Sciences connecting all Schools and other facilities at the College. We have also upgraded Chiromo Campus – YMCA link road at a cost of Kshs.11 million. These projects are in addition to the many others completed through internally generated income bringing the total spent on stalled projects to Kshs. 938 million for the last three years.

Through the reforms and activities we are undertaking, I am optimistic that the University should retain its undisputed leading position locally

as number one and improve to a single digit level in the continental ranking up from the current position 23.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the University of Nairobi runs an active corporate social responsibility programme. To ensure that all segments of the University are involved in this programme, all colleges are now required to give back to the community. This year, the College of Health Sciences led by Prof. Isaac Kibwage held free medical camps in various parts of the country. Their most outstanding activity is the reconstructive surgery undertaken successfully free

of charge by the School of Dental Sciences on Ms. Ndusya Kilonzo, who had a massive growth in the mandible that had disfigured her face. She had lived with the problem for over five years due to lack of finances to seek specialized treatment. The team was led by our own Prof. Guthua and Prof. Chindia. In a separate activity, staff and students of the College of Biological and Physical Sciences led by the Principal, Prof. Lucy Irungu made donations of food, clothing and a water tank to an orphanage, Kajiado Children's Home. In another event, the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences took part in a tree planting exercise at the Ngong Forest, the

activity which also involved staff and students, aimed at conserving our natural resources. These are alongside other activities that include scholarships worth Kshs. 38 million for needy students set aside in this years' budget, work-study programmes and the University's general participation on issues of national concern.

Ladies and Gentlemen, during this electioneering period, I am happy to note that, so far most political players have not involved the University directly in politics. In this respect, I would like to thank the players most sincerely for keeping off the University.

The University of Nairobi, as a public organization is apolitical and serves the government of the day and everybody irrespective of political leanings. We will not allow individuals to use the University's corporate name in advancing their own political interests. However, this being a democratic country, you are entitled to your personal opinions and freedom as citizens.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, our efforts to build this University have received enormous goodwill and support from various quarters. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the government for its overall

continued support, our partners for assisting us in various projects, the staff for their diligence and hard work and the University management for consistently supporting me in building this University. I would also like to thank the students for observing the rules and regulations governing their conduct and also for maintaining the very high level discipline that has ensured smooth running of the University. This is definitely not a weakness but remarkable strength. The University Community and the Kenyan public are very proud of you.

I would like to thank you Mr. Chancellor Sir and the University of Nairobi Council through the Chairman, Mr. John Simba for your continued support and commitment towards our endeavour to attain world class excellence.

Finally, I would like to thank graduands of the 38th congregation. I wish you successful careers and also encourage you to come back and further your studies. In the same breath, I request you to join our Alumni Association and support us in building this great University.

With those few remarks, I now welcome the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education, Prof. Karega Mutahi to address this congregation and invite the Chancellor to make his formal speech.

Thank you and God bless.