



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH BY PROF. GEORGE A.O. MAGOHA, VICE
CHANCELLOR ON THE OCCASION OF THE 40TH
GRADUATION CEREMONY AT CHANCELLOR'S
COURT ON FRIDAY DECEMBER 19, 2008**

**Hon. Dr. Sally Kosgei, MP, Minister for Higher
Education, Science and Technology,**

Cabinet Ministers

**Your Excellencies the Ambassadors and High
Commissioners**

**Mr. John Simba, Chairman, University of Nairobi
Council,**

Council Members,

**Prof. George Magoha, Vice-Chancellor, University of
Nairobi**

Chancellors of all other universities,

University Officials,

Parents and Guardians,

Graduands,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to once again welcome you to the University of Nairobi to celebrate the success of our young men and women.

The 40th Graduation of the University of Nairobi comes barely two months after the historic 39th Graduation Ceremony during which three prominent African leaders – H.E. Mwai Kibaki, the Rt. Hon. Raila Odinga and H.E. Dr. Kofi Annan were recognised for their contribution in ending the violence that followed the disputed 2007 Presidential election.

May I take this opportunity on behalf of the University of Nairobi community to thank these great leaders for honouring the University with

their presence and accepting the richly deserved Doctor of Laws Degree conferred upon them.

We are here today, Ladies and Gentlemen, to celebrate the success of our young men and women who have worked extremely hard to get where they are. We congratulate them on a job well done. We are today graduating 4,013 students which together with the 4,618 who graduated in October make a total number of graduands this academic year to be 8,631.

The parents and guardians who sacrificed their increasingly limited resources to pay for the graduands' education must be commended for their foresight in choosing to invest in education,

the most important vehicle for success in a globalized knowledge economy that is the 21st century.

Credit must also go to the teachers for their role in imparting knowledge to and mentoring the graduands. Going by history, our graduates have always proven to be well prepared and have excelled wherever they have gone. I wish to assure our stakeholders that the University of Nairobi will remain committed to ensuring that the high academic standards for which we are famous are maintained.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the University of Nairobi has had to deal with a number of challenges this year,

the most significant of which was the disruption of our academic programmes caused by the post-election violence. The prolonged delay in reopening after the Christmas break cost the University a substantial amount of revenue thereby undermining our ability to compensate our service providers on time.

I am pleased to report that our programmes are now fully on track and every effort is being made to ensure all outstanding payments to service providers are made within one month. In this regard, I wish to thank all staff and other stakeholders for their patience and appeal to them to redouble their efforts to ensure that we remain

the leading institution of higher learning in the country.

The University of Nairobi is the nation's largest reservoir of intellectual resources. Our scholars are very active in research and their outputs have had a significant impact of Government policy. Our research activities have benefited considerably from donor support, both local and international.

In this regard I wish to thank the Tianjin Municipal Government and the Government of the People's Republic of China for donating twenty (20) scholarships to support teaching of Chinese Language at the Confucius Institute. I also want to thank the Trustees of the Centre for Advanced

Studies in Environmental Law and Policy (CASELAP) for partnering with the University to establish the Centre. This initiative offers an excellent avenue for public-private sector partnership whose success will undoubtedly be emulated by others.

Ladies and Gentlemen, our quest to become a worldclass University committed to scholarly excellence is unshakeable. The reform programme which we embarked on a few years back is meant to ensure that we achieve our mission of providing quality university education and training through creation, preservation, integration, transmission and utilization of knowledge. This reform programme has resulted in improved service

delivery as evidenced by the recent attainment of ISO 9001: 2000 certification. Indeed the dramatic improvement in relations between students and management is in part due to these reforms which emphasize good corporate governance, and the responsible manner in which SONU has been managing students' affairs. The current peace at the University is clear evidence that dialogue works. We commend the student community and its leadership for their maturity and discipline which has contributed to the improvement of our corporate image.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, I wish to congratulate our gallant academic staff for excellent performance. This academic year 2007/2008, University of

Nairobi has graduated 42 PhD's, which is 100% improvement from 2 years ago. This particular 2nd graduation this year has produced 30 PhD's from the Colleges of Humanities and Social Sciences and Health Sciences including nine from the Faculty of Arts, six from the School of Business and two from the School of Economics. This is thoroughly commendable and is a direct result of the implementation by Senate of the Kagiko Report which has streamlined Research and promotions at the University.

I further wish to commend and congratulate all staff, both non academic and academic for their tolerance and total dedication to duty during this academic year despite the very difficult financial

situation occasioned by the political issues at the beginning of this year. I wish on behalf of Senate and Council to thank you most sincerely.

I also wish to thank my management team and the entire University community for their support during the past year. All of you have performed your duties very well. In particular I wish to recognize and commend Prof. Henry Wangutusi Mutoro, Principal College of Education and External Studies for emerging the best overall performer for two consecutive years using the performance contracting process.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the University is doing its best to realise its mandate. We nevertheless still face

numerous challenges. Our physical infrastructure, for example, is severely stretched owing to the rapid increase in the student population now approaching 46,000. Our research fund at 700 million Kenya Shillings is still inadequate and depends mostly on donor support. Indeed Government funding to the University has remained at 38% of the budget for the last few years. This gross under funding by Government though understandable is imposing a huge burden on the University and is likely to compromise our ability to offer quality education to our many young people. I wish therefore to appeal to the Government to increase funding to the University from the current 38% to a more reasonable percentage.

I wish to emphasize Mr. Chancellor Sir that our three Trade Unions, UASU, UNTESU and KUDHEIHA have been most understanding in their industrial relations with the University management. I further wish to encourage both UNTESU and KUDHEIHA to proceed and sign agreement for the other allowances like UASU has done to enable us commence CBA negotiations for all the unions early next year. We all urge the Government to immediately release to all public Universities supplementary funding to cater for the recent court awards without further delay as we must comply with the court orders.

Let me at the outset emphasize the fact that the

University fully appreciates the support it continues to receive from the good Government of His Excellency President Mwai Kibaki and affirm our commitment to ensure all funds are used responsibly.

In concluding, I wish to thank all the stakeholders for supporting our University. To the graduands, mine is to congratulate you once again for doing us proud. We have every confidence that you will be able to surmount whatever challenges you encounter out there because you have been adequately prepared by the best experts in the leading institution of higher learning in the country.

**Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen. Have a Merry
Christmas and happy New Year.**