



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR GEORGE A.O.
MAGOHA, VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF
NAIROBI DURING THE 41ST GRADUATION CEREMONY
AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT ON FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER 18, 2009**

Dr. Joseph Barrage Wanjui, Chancellor, University of Nairobi

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

Your Excellencies the Ambassadors and High Commissioners

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

Council Members,

Chancellors of all other universities,

University Officials,

Parents and Guardians,

Graduands,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is with great joy and pleasure that I welcome you to the 41st Congregation of the University of Nairobi for the conferment of degrees and award of diplomas and certificates to granduands. I would like to congratulate the granduands on their achievement. I also thank parents, guardians, teachers and all those who contributed to the successful completion of your studies.

Allow me to begin my remarks, Mr. Chancellor Sir, by congratulating you on your re-appointment for another term by his Excellency the President Hon. Mwai Kibaki. Your re-appointment as Chancellor is not only an honour to you but also to the University of Nairobi

which has witnessed tremendous progress over the last six years under your guidance.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the young men and women before you are drawn from four colleges: Colleges of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences; Architecture and Engineering; Biological and Physical Sciences and Education and External Studies. The other two colleges: Colleges of Health Sciences and Humanities and Social Sciences will hold their graduation ceremony on 4th December, 2009.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this year has been particularly difficult for our people and the nation in general. The global economic crisis which affected most countries

did not spare Kenya. The situation has been made worse by the longest and most severe drought the country has ever experienced in recent times. The current economic crisis has drastically reduced the amount of money available to the government to fund public services. We at the University of Nairobi like any other responsible corporate have had to tighten our belts. We have put in place stringent measures to ensure prudent and effective utilization of the limited financial resources available.

I am pleased to report that we have continued to run our academic programmes and conduct University business normally. Indeed our Annual Report and Accounts for the financial year which ended June 30,

2009 are ready and do confirm that the University still remains a viable entity, the financial constraints notwithstanding.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the University reform programme which was started about five years ago under your guidance is now firmly entrenched. All our colleges and administrative units sign performance contracts with Council which in turn signs a performance contract with the government. I am extremely happy to report that this practice of setting targets for all our colleges and units has resulted in remarkable improvement in performance and delivery of services to our customers. I would like to specifically mention Prof. Lucy Irungu, Principal, College of Biological and

Physical Sciences (CBPS) for being first this year with a mean score of 1.8322 and Prof. Henry Mutoro, Principal, College of Education and External Studies (CEES) being second with a mean score of 1.8587. The management will reward and sanction as appropriate. I would also like to congratulate other colleges and units for having achieved their performance targets. You have done well but can always do better.

Ladies and Gentlemen, research output is regarded as an important yard stick for measuring the success of academic institutions. For many years, research at the University of Nairobi was severely constrained by lack of funds. Most research activity then depended on donor support. We have since made considerable

progress towards improving research by increasing the research kitty using internally generated funds. We have also intensified collaboration with our local and international partners which has resulted in a substantial increase in research grants made available to the University. In this regard, I wish to thank our academic staff for their contribution towards enhancement of the research kitty. In particular I wish to single out Dr. Elizabeth Obimbo of the Department of Paediatrics and Child Health for sourcing a staggering 2.8 million USD for research activities this academic year. We now receive from donors an average Kshs. 800 million annually on top of the Kshs. 100 million set aside by the University Council for

research. We are grateful to our donors for this support and assure them that the funds will be put to good use.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the University is committed to maintaining high academic standards. We have strengthened our infrastructure by initiating new projects to increase space, proper maintenance of existing buildings and equipment, integration of ICT in our operations especially teaching and research. We have also continued to train staff to the highest level, to admit the best students and to enhance linkages with our partners.

It is important to mention here, Mr. Chancellor sir, that the University of Nairobi is at the forefront in the use of technology to enhance service delivery. We have in this regard taken many strides to institutionalize e-learning (electronic learning). The University has so far held key sensitization programmes for top management, staff and students.

To date, we now have 165 courses on our e-learning platform actively accessed by our students. We have in addition integrated the SMIS into e-learning to ensure

our students benefit from quality learning materials. Preparations are underway to roll out e-learning at Extra-Mural centres countrywide.

All these measures are intended to enhance accessibility and quality of our programmes in keeping with our stated objective of becoming a world-class university.

I wish to commend our students body for maintaining cordial relations with the administration which has contributed to peaceful settlement of disputes

whenever they have arisen. I also would like to thank our staff for their commitment to duty. We concluded Collective Bargaining Agreements with all the three Unions before the end of the last financial year. We have not been able to implement the agreement because government is yet to release the funds required. Our staff have been extremely patient and we thank them. I wish to appeal to the government to release the funds that were promised to the University to enable us honour our part of the agreement.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the image of the University was a very big concern to you at the beginning of your tenure. The University management has worked hard to improve the public perception of our institution. We have in this regard worked very closely with our student leadership, staff and local private sector partners. I believe we have made good progress. This is evidenced by the number of prominent international figures who have been visiting the University in the recent past. The increasing visibility of the University can only mean good things for us.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the graduands before us will be joining the labor market, others will continue with their studies. I wish to encourage you to continue to better yourselves academically and professionally so that this graduation does not mean the end, but rather the beginning of your prosperity.

Let me once again congratulate you on your achievement and wish you every success in your future endeavours.

Thank you.

