



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

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**SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROF. GEORGE A.O.  
MAGOHA, VICE-CHANCELLOR UNIVERSITY OF  
NAIROBI DURING THE 43<sup>RD</sup> GRADUATION CEREMONY  
ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2010 AT THE  
CHANCELLOR'S COURT**

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**Dr. Joseph Barrage Wanjui, Chancellor, University of Nairobi**

**Hon. William Ruto, Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology**

**Your Excellencies the Ambassadors and High Commissioners**

**Prof. Crispus Kiamba, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology**

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

**Chancellors of other universities present**

**Vice-Chancellors of other universities**

**Council members**

**Parents and Guardians**

**Graduands**

**Distinguished guest, Ladies and Gentlemen**

**It is with great pleasure that I welcome you all to our 43<sup>rd</sup> Graduation ceremony. This is a historical occasion being the first graduation under the new constitution. May I therefore take this opportunity to congratulate all the graduands for completing their studies successfully. I would also like to congratulate all the parents, guardians, teachers and everyone else who in one way or the other contributed to your success.**

**As you are aware, Mr. Chancellor Sir, it has now become customary for the University of Nairobi to hold two graduation ceremonies in a year. This graduation, the first this year involves four colleges: College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, College of Architecture and Engineering, College of Biological and Physical Sciences and College of Education and External Studies. The remaining two Colleges of Humanities and Social Sciences and Health Sciences will hold their graduation ceremony on 3<sup>rd</sup> December this year.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, my appointment as Vice-Chancellor nearly six years ago came at a time when the government had started rolling out the public sector reforms whose aim was to improve efficiency and service delivery. It was a particularly anxious time for many heads of government organizations because most of the ideas they were required to put into practice were quite new and had never been associated with public service.**

**We nevertheless took up the challenge and six years down the line, we are still here. I guess I was the**

**luckier one among my peers because I had the good fortune of having two excellent bosses; our Council Chairman, Mr. John Nyangeri Simba who in his gentle but firm manner was able to guide me and my management as we navigated the treacherous waters of implementing radical reforms in an institution that is quite conservative. Whatever we have been able to achieve would also not have been possible without the strategic and results based leadership of our Chancellor, Dr. Joseph Barrage Wanjui. Thank you Sir for having faith in me and for re-appointing me for a second term. I wish to assure you that we**

**shall continue to strive even harder to make the University of Nairobi a model institution of higher learning this country, region and the world at large.**

**To implement the reforms that the University had embarked on meant that staff would have to be trained. We have in this regard trained all management and most of the other staff on various issues including Team Building, Financial Management, Results Based Management, Performance Contracting, ICT, Good Cooperate Governance and corruption eradication measures.**

**One of the biggest challenges the University has had to contend with over the years is gross underfunding. Being a public institution, the main source of funds is the government which owing to the prevailing hostile economic environment has increasingly been unable to cater for our financial needs. This forced the University to institute strict financial control measures aimed at ensuring prudent use of the limited funds available. The above measures together with improved revenue collection have resulted in substantial savings that have seen our budget grow**

**from KShs.5.8 billion in 2005 to KShs.9.3 billion in 2010.**

**Inability by the government to adequately fund the University had for a long time constrained research activities. The University has over the last five years increased the annual research fund from KShs.350 million a year to a staggering KShs.1.36 billion during this year. This fund is generated by our excellent academic staff through their individual international syndicates. I would like to thank our international collaborators in particular for this**

**partnership which has contributed to strengthening of our academic and research programmes.**

**Hon. Minister, the University of Nairobi true to its tradition as a leader became one of the first public universities to receive ISO certification. Given our size, it was no mean task to have the entire institution 9001:2008 certified. I must in this regard commend all staff for the sterling job they did towards developing systems and procedures used in service delivery that led to our certification.**

**The University of Nairobi is totally committed to the development of this nation and the realization of Vision 2030. We have not only increased the number of students admitted leading to rapid increase in the student population from 12,300 in 2000 to the current over 50,000 but also ensured they continue to receive relevant market driven quality education that meets international standards. Our over 110,000 alumni including the Hon. Minister comprise a key component of the highly skilled manpower that drives the economy of this nation.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, the University has over the last six years invested a substantial amount of money to improve its physical infrastructure. We have not only nearly completed all the stalled projects that were started 20 years ago but have also initiated and completed many new ones including halls of residence, lecture theatres, laboratories and offices. Our ICT infrastructure is relatively well developed. With over 6,000 computers for use by students and staff, the University of Nairobi is among the best technologically equipped institutions of higher learning. We hope to increase the ratio of PCs to 1:1**

**for staff and 1:10 for students. Related to this is our library system comprising eleven libraries whose modernization programme has made significant progress. Today, the library boasts of over 40,000 electronic journals and over 700,000 volumes accessible to all our students and staff.**

**Mr. Chancellor Sir, when you were appointed Chancellor seven (7) years ago, you expressed your great concern about poor discipline among our students which was eroding the good name of the University. The University management in response**

**undertook remedial measures which included reorganizing the governance structure of the University to allow student representation and engagement of student leadership in continuous dialogue. These measures worked very well and for five and half years the University experienced unprecedented tranquility that enabled academic programmes to run uninterrupted. Unfortunately, this tranquility was shattered four months ago when a group of unruly students disrupted SONU elections under the pretext that the process had been compromised. The same group mobilized their**

**colleagues who engaged in acts of violence that resulted in destruction of public and University property prompting the Senate to order temporary closure of the University.**

**The above incidents regrettable as they are serve to demonstrate the challenges management still faces in its endeavour to change the mindset of some of our student leaders. We shall nevertheless continue our efforts to instill in the student community better discipline. I am happy to report Mr. Chancellor Sir that the University has since normalized and the**

**perpetrators of the violence were identified and have been dealt with in accordance with the rules and regulations governing the conduct and discipline of students.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, the University places a lot of importance on staff welfare. We have as a consequence sought to maintain cordial relations with the three Unions which has contributed to industrial peace at the University. In this regard, I wish to commend both the union and staff for their patience following the delay of government to release**

**funds for the implementation of the last phase of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.**

**Mr. Chancellor Sir, the reforms which the University instituted six years or so ago have taken root. Our service delivery has improved considerably. During the 2009/2010 performance contract period, the University was ranked number one (1) in Public Universities category and number two (2) in the state corporations category. In the recently released webometric ranking of universities, the University of Nairobi at position 26 out of 623 universities in**

**Africa was still the highest ranked university in Kenya.**

**Mr. Chancellor Sir, Hon. Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, the University management has done the best it can under the circumstances to position itself as a world-class institution of higher learning. It has unfortunately had to contend with numerous challenges, the most important of which as I indicated earlier is lack of funding. The government contribution to the University budget has been diminishing over the years and currently stands at**

**40%. This limited funding imposes a heavy burden on the University which has to raise 60% of the recurrent budget and expenditure on its own. I wish to appeal to the Hon. Minister to intercede with the government on our behalf so that it can improve the financial support given to the University at the very least to be responsible for the gross payroll. This will enable us to pay staff well, develop/maintain infrastructure, grow our research kitty and reward excellence.**

**Mr. Chancellor Sir, the men and women before you represent the best of our society. They comprise 26 PhDs, 675 Masters, 43 Postgraduate Diplomas, 2377 Bachelors and 1,311 Diplomas. We are proud of them because they have worked diligently and excelled. We have no doubt that they will be successful in their chosen careers.**

**Before concluding, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to thank our gallant academic staff for their commitment to duty and our brand which has enabled the University to earn the extra income that**

**funds most of our activities. The rest of the staff have also played their part for which we are grateful. I would be remiss in my responsibilities if I did not thank the Government for supporting us in all our endeavours and particularly in granting greater autonomy in the management of University grants.**

**I want to conclude my remarks by once again congratulating all the graduands on their achievement. May you find success in all your future endeavours.**

**Thank you**