



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY PROFESSOR GEORGE A.O.
MAGOHA, VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF
NAIROBI DURING THE 44TH GRADUATION CEREMONY
AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT ON FRIDAY
DECEMBER 3, 2010**

Dr. Joseph Barrage Wanjui, Chancellor, University of Nairobi

Hon. Prof. Hellen Sambili, MP, Ag. 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,

Council Members,

Distinguished Scholars,

Parents and Guardians,

Graduands,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the University of Nairobi's 44th Graduation Ceremony for the conferment of degrees and award of diplomas to graduands drawn mainly from the Colleges of Health Sciences and Humanities and Social Sciences. The other four colleges held their graduation ceremony on September 24, 2010. This auspicious occasion will forever be remembered by both the graduands and their parents for it marks the formal conclusion of a long and often challenging journey to academic excellence.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, the 4,513 young men and women before you have been trained at various level in different fields including medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, law, business administration,

economics, political science and diplomacy. In total, we are awarding 18 Ph.Ds, 1299 Masters, 2892 Bachelors, 58 Postgraduate Diplomas and 276 Ordinary Diplomas. They have been taught and mentored by some of the best scholars in the region. The training they underwent was most rigorous and the fact that they are here today is a confirmation that they are quality material. I wish therefore, to congratulate all the graduands for completing their studies successfully. You have done yourselves, your parents, teachers and indeed all of us proud. Your success is clear proof that discipline, good planning and hard work always bears fruit. I am confident that you will find success in your chosen careers if you maintain the same spirit.

Ladies and gentlemen, top universities in the world over are characterized by among other things:

- **A strong/sustainable financial base**
- **Quality faculty of international repute**
- **Good physical infrastructure**
- **Strong research credentials**
- **Quality students**
- **An effective management team**
- **Healthy mutually beneficial links with industry**
- **A well established corporate social responsibility agenda that enables such institutions to contribute to the development of their communities.**

The University of Nairobi being a public institution that relies on the government for most of its funding, is not

well endowed financially. We have for the last five years been pleading with the government to consider increasing the amount of funding extended to the University of Nairobi without much success. I want once again, to appeal to the new Ag. Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology, who by virtue of being an academic colleague, must be aware of the challenges we are facing, to intercede for us with the government.

Ladies and gentlemen, financial constraints notwithstanding, the University of Nairobi has the highest number of professors and Ph.D. holders in the country. Many of our scholars are engaged in cutting edge research with international collaborators. To

date, we remain the only institution of higher learning in the region to produce a Nobel Laureate, the world re-known Prof. Wangari Maathai. The work of our researchers at KAVI particularly relating to the search for an HIV/AIDS vaccine, has received worldwide attention. This comparative advantage over our competitors makes the University of Nairobi a popular option among students who wish to pursue higher education. Indeed, the best students in every cohort make the University their first choice. The quality of students is very high as exemplified by their performance during their studies and after graduation. There is no meaningful endeavour at the national level that does not involve graduates of the University of Nairobi. We are proud of our alumni because they have

been excellent ambassadors of the University wherever they have gone.

Ladies and gentlemen, the above achievements have been made possible by the presence of a strong reform minded management team, committed to transforming the University into a world class institution. We have in this regard benefited immensely from the guidance of the Council drawn mainly from the private sector and the wise counsel of our most able Chancellor, Dr. Joseph Barrage Wanjui. Our emergence as the top University during the 2008/2009 performance contract period and our improvement in the ranking of Universities are a clear indication that we are on the right track.

Ladies and gentlemen, the University of Nairobi has been at the forefront in the promotion of good corporate governance. Indeed, we became the first state corporation to hire its top managers competitively which was followed by restructuring of the University units and overhaul of the management system and procedures in accordance with ISO standards. The revamping of our operational systems which was confirmed by the award of ISO 9001:2008 certification by the Kenya Bureau of Standards in 2008 has resulted in improvement of service delivery to our customers. We not only have a service charter that clearly indicates the kind of service our customers

should expect but have also trained staff in the relevant areas including customer care.

Ladies and gentlemen, the University management has put in place stringent measures to ensure that the institution remains free of corruption. All our processes and operational procedures, for example, are clearly documented. Admission of students is conducted in a transparent manner. Appointment, deployment and promotion of staff is based on merit. The procurement department has been professionalized to ensure compliance with the law when purchasing goods and services. We have in addition, instituted an effective financial management system that has

resulted in efficient utilization of the available limited financial resources.

Ladies and gentlemen, the University of Nairobi has demonstrated its resilience over the years, by overcoming numerous challenges. From the financial crisis of the late 1990s that saw the introduction of Module II programmes as a way of generating additional revenue, we have grown to become the biggest provider of high level skilled manpower to the nation with a student population of 52,000. Our academic programmes are popular because they are relevant, meet the expectations of our customers and are administered by qualified academic staff in an environment that is conducive to learning.

The University of Nairobi, ladies and gentlemen, remains a critical player in national development. As we come to the end of yet another successful year, I wish to assure all stakeholders that we shall not relent in our endeavour to transform the university into a regional centre for academic excellence. We have done relatively well given the circumstances but can do better. Our achievements can be attributed to the support management has received from all stakeholders especially students and staff. It is their discipline and commitment to duty that made it possible for our academic programmes to run smoothly. I sincerely thank them. I must also thank the University Council under the leadership of our

Chairman, Mr. John Simba for his able leadership under the guidance of our Chancellor, Dr. Joseph Wanjui. We are grateful to the government through the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology for recognizing our efforts to improve the University and giving us the space to do so.

I also thank the media particularly Citizen Television for live coverage to our graduation ceremonies for the past five years. We cherish our relationship and the role you play in modeling our youth about the importance of higher education.

In concluding, I wish to thank all our guests for honouring us with your presence thus making today's

event both colourful and a great success. I would also like once again, to congratulate all the graduands on your wonderful achievement and wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year.

Thank You.