

SPEECH BY THE CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION, PROF. GEORGE A.O. MAGOHA, CBS, DURING THE 63RD GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI ON SEPTEMBER 25, 2020

- **University of Nairobi Chancellor, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi;**
- **Council chairperson, Prof. Julia Ojiambo;**
- **Members of the University Community;**
- **Graduands and their families joining us virtually;**

- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is my greatest honour and privilege to officiate the 63rd Graduation Ceremony of the University of Nairobi during which 3,000 graduands will be awarded various degrees. I take this early opportunity to congratulate the graduands for this very important milestone in your life and wish you well in your future endeavours.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The setup of this virtual graduation is evidence that the use of technology is no longer an alternative, but an acceptable way of doing business, including education. We may have delayed in reaching this realization, but we have made a significant progress since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country in March this year. Even before the pandemic, my Ministry had planned on the delivery of 30% of the programmes in public universities through e-learning. This target was to be achieved over a period of five years through investment in

the Open, Distance and e-learning model popularly called ODeL.

I would like to commend the management of the University of Nairobi for moving with speed to embrace online learning and teaching. This included conducting semester examinations to about 10,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students.

I wish to announce that following the advice from the Ministry of Health, education stakeholders met

on September 21st to review the preparedness for educational institutions to reopen in the face of the ongoing flattening of the curve.

I am happy to report that the stakeholders resolved to allow science-based students to return to their universities, especially those in the final year, to clear the way for them to complete their programme. Earlier, we had allowed medical students in their final year to resume learning. We hope that necessary measures are in place in our

universities to ensure compliance with all Ministry of Health protocols as students start returning.

Going forward, we will be announcing more resolutions made by the education stakeholders, which could lead to the reopening of universities as guided by various Senates and Councils.

As we seek to resume learning, we should focus on addressing the key issues of quality of teaching and the challenges facing the students and lecturers as

critical stakeholders in the implementation of e-learning. The Ministry will work with universities and partners in the education sector to support the successful implementation of e-learning. On this aspect, I urge the universities to pursue opportunities for partnership with private investors to ensure that students have access to the opportunities they need to tap into the vast academic resources that online learning can offer. In addition to improving the infrastructure, universities should also invest in building the

capacity of the academic staff to offer effective e-learning. This is also the time to institute the much needed reforms by reviewing programmes and aligning them with the development agenda of the country.

Universities must aim at specialization and strategically invest in programmes that will attract external funding rather than duplication of courses.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is no better time to gauge the value of our universities than during times of crises. At this point, I would like to commend researchers from Kenyan universities for being in the forefront of sharing their knowledge and expertise as we continue to seek answers on the best way of containing the coronavirus disease and managing the socio-economic impact of the pandemic.

We look forward to local scientists, some who continue to work around the clock, finding a

vaccine against the novel coronavirus, I also appreciate your efforts and wish you the best.

The government has set aside funds for research by the academic staff in universities to be disbursed by the National Research Fund. I would like to encourage you to tap into these resources to support the government's Big 4 Agenda, Vision 2030, and the global Sustainable Development Goals.

As we prepare to return to normalcy, the difficult journey ahead of us will require the understanding and cooperation of everyone. Let us have honest engagement as stakeholders and exercise patience even when our expectations have not been met.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As I conclude my remarks today, I would like to congratulate the University of Nairobi as it marks 50 years of existence this year. The University has established itself as an academic giant in the

region. The University of Nairobi is also the alma mater of some of the greatest leaders in the service of our country and the world at large. I am proud to be part of the rich history and achievements of the University.

Once again, I would like to congratulate all graduands and wish them God's blessings.