UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. GEORGE A.O. MAGOHA, DURING THE OFFICIAL CEREMONY TO LAY THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI TOWERS BY HIS EXCELLENCY HON UHURU KENYATTA, CGH. THE PRESIDENT AND COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCES OF KENYA ON AUGUST 26, 2014 AT THE MAIN CAMPUS AT 8.00 AM
His Excellency Hon Uhuru Kenyatta, President and Commander in Chief of the Defence of Forces the Republic of Kenya

H. E. Deputy President, Hon. William Ruto

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Science and Technology, Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi

Other Cabinet Secretaries & Principal Secretaries

Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi

Chairman of Council, Dr. Idle Farah

University of Nairobi Council, Management & Senate

Staff & Students
Distinguished guests

Ladies and Gentlemen
It is our privilege to welcome His Excellency to the University during this ceremony of laying the foundation stone of the University of Nairobi Towers.

Your Excellency, this is the third time that you are joining the University community in the last four years. The first time was when as the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, you were a panelist in an IMF discourse on Africa’s Economic transformation. Late last year, you were also here to launch the Youth Fund.
Your Excellency, we are proud to let you know that this University is the gold standard of Higher Education of this country and region, with 146 full Professors and 276 Associate Professors. We have 70 thousand students of whom 13 thousand are graduate. Furthermore, last year we graduated over 14,300 students including two higher doctorates, 95 PhDs and over 3,300 Masters degrees. As a state agency of Government, the University of Nairobi community is proud to be part of your administration.

Your Excellency, it is no wonder this University now is the first university in Sub-Saharan Africa, if you remove South Africa at position No.9 out of 1307 in Africa and position 907 out of 22,000 Universities in
the world some of which are over hundreds of years old. You will recall that the University of Nairobi is 50 years.

With regards to the performance contracting process introduced by the Government of Kenya some years ago, it is important to let you know that our University has consistently remained among the top and the only entity to ever acquire the position of Excellence within the whole of public service.

Your Excellency, on behalf of the University of Nairobi Chancellor, Council, Senate, Staff and students, I wish to thank the previous government of H. E. Hon. Mwai Kibaki and your own good government for the
continued support accorded us that has enabled us transform the way it has done, to be the pride of all Kenyans including the Government. We are satisfied to be judged by the results of what we do rather than what we say.

Today we are honoured that you are presiding over the laying of a foundation stone of one of the landmark buildings in a University that is at the heart of the city of Nairobi. This demonstrates that the University of Nairobi holds a special place in your heart.

Your Excellency, this project was conceptualized over five years ago as the solution to the ever increasing problem of teaching and office space. The project is
designed to have 22 floors with learning facilities to accommodate 5000 students and house the following facilities: the Vice-Chancellor’s Suite, All the Deputy Vice-Chancellor’s Suites, Senate Boardroom, Council Chamber, two lecture theatres with a capacity to sit 500 persons including one designated as an amphitheatre and a Centre for Performing Arts, four lecture theatres of 300 persons, many other rooms to cater for a minimum of 60 persons, a floor for the University of Nairobi Graduate School, currently the Board of Postgraduate Studies and five floors for the University of Nairobi Graduate School of Business among others. It will also have a helipad.
On completion, the Towers is estimated to cost KES 2.5 billion. The funding for this project is mainly sourced from internally generated income. The University management through prudent financial management, savings and good corporate governance saved KES 2 billion before embarking on the project. We have also intensively continued raise funds for the balance. I would like to single out the Chandaria Foundation for their generous contribution of KES 50 million towards the financing of the project. I am also in the final stages of negotiations for a grant of the sum of KES 150 million with an international collaborator. In honour of this gesture, the University will name the centre for performing arts, the “Chandaria Centre of Performing Arts”. In this regard, I
am challenging other Kenyans of means to come forward and support the University in its endeavour to build capacity and increase access in higher education and training. Their names will remain in the building for eternity.

Your Excellency, I wish to personally confirm to you that this Tower shall be completed and completed on time. I also wish to confirm that by December this year, God willing, the contractor who are currently on the 8th floor shall have reached the 22nd floor. This will be due to prudent use of time and very firm supervision.
Ladies and gentlemen, it is envisaged that the Tower will not only provide the much-needed teaching space but also assert and affirm the position of the University of Nairobi as the leader of architectural thought, innovation and champion towards the provision of environmentally friendly solutions.

Thus the University of Nairobi Towers is expected to be an inspiring and attractive showcase of “green” buildings, and once realized, the final facility will attain signature status in all aspects of cutting-edge architecture. The facility will be a place where users will be proud to undertake world-class scholarly work, receive and interact with global leaders, scholars, the
private sector, as well as other prominent guests. Your Excellency, even the sourcing of architectural designs was unique, as the process was conducted through a competitive mode involving all interested architectural firms whose outcome was evaluated by a panel of local and international experts.

As we embarked on the construction of this project, we encountered difficulties including legal challenges however I acknowledge the solutions offered by our professionals that ensured that we remain on course. Among them, I would like to mention Dr. Joe Barrage Wanjui, former Chancellor, Dr. John P. N. Simba, former Chairman of Council, the current Chancellor Dr. Vijoo Rattansi, current Chairman of Council, Dr. Idle
Farah, the current Council and my management and Senate for having remained committed to ensuring the University of Nairobi Towers, a flagship project of Vision 2030 becomes a reality. The project is the largest project ever done by the University of Nairobi since the last 24 years. Other important stakeholders who have ensured that the project is implemented as planned include architect, James Waweru of Waweru and Associates, his professional consultants and the contractor, China, Wu Yi Co Ltd. With their assurance the project will be completed on time.

Finally, I wish to thank in very special manner the Engineers Registration Board of Kenya, together with
the current Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Engineer Kamau for their professional rescue of the project through thorough engineering due diligence without which this project would have stalled. With those few remarks, it is my pleasure to invite the cabinet secretary to make his remarks and invite the head of state.