ADDRESS BY MR. JOHN SIMBA, CHAIRMAN, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI COUNCIL ON THE OCCASION OF THE PRIZE PRESENTATION CEREMONY ON FRIDAY 29TH APRIL, 2005 AT 10.00 A.M. AT TAIFA HALL.
The Vice-Chancellor, Professor G.A.O. Magoha

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Professor J.T. Kaimenyi

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Ladies and Gentlemen
I am delighted to be with you here today on this important occasion, the award of the 2002/2003 prizes.

This is a special day for me because it is the first function for me to preside over since I was appointed Chairman, University of Nairobi Council. Allow me, therefore, Ladies and Gentlemen, to share with you a few of my thoughts about our expectations as parents and managers of this institution.
Ladies and Gentlemen, we have heard on numerous occasions that the University of Nairobi is the oldest, biggest, most diverse and complex university in Kenya. We have also been told that the University of Nairobi admits the best students joining the local universities on completion of their secondary education. Under the circumstances, therefore, it is not illogical for society to expect the best from such potentially talented students. Yet as you have just heard from the Vice-Chancellor, this ceremony which should have taken place last year, had to be
postponed following closure of the University after student disturbances. The unfortunate thing about these disturbances is that they are costly and unnecessary. They are costly because they not only mar the good name of the University but also result in loss of time and resources, both material and financial. Indeed, to many outsiders, the words “rioter” and “stone thrower” have become synonymous with University of Nairobi students. The disruptions are unnecessary because many of the problems that lead to riots can be resolved through dialogue.
Mr. Vice-Chancellor, I am aware that you are already dealing with the problem of indiscipline at the University by both staff and students and I must commend you for that. Let me nevertheless remind our students in particular that the fact that they are bright and performed well in their exams to gain entry into the premier University is not a good reason to be arrogant and insensitive to the needs of other members of society. Being the best means that society has certain expectations. Unfortunately for you, the expectations are extremely high. Your
parents, guardians, teachers and indeed the whole nation expects a lot from you. You have shown that you have potential to develop into productive and useful members of society. Do not disappoint the millions of Kenyans who look up to you by engaging in acts that tarnish the good name of the University and undermine your chances of getting quality education and a good career.

The secret to success is hard work, discipline and respect for society’s rules. You will not realize your full potential unless you are willing to make
sacrifices, and invest your youthful energies wisely. Times have never been harder: we know that, although you may not realise that we do. The University has only so much by way of resources. We have done the best we could under the circumstances. We shall continue striving to ensure that the learning environment is appropriate. We however need your understanding and support to succeed. Help us to give you the means to survive in an increasingly competitive knowledge based global village.
Ladies and Gentlemen, excellence in any institution of higher learning must be judged by the international yardstick. Many of our scholars here are internationally respected because of their achievements in research in the various fields of specialization. Our graduates who enrol for higher degrees in foreign universities have in many instances excelled because of the good training they receive while at this University. The presence of the prize recipients here today is indeed confirmation of the ability of this institution to produce quality products of an international standard.
You, the recipients, have used your God-given brains well, through sheer hard work and reflective thinking. We are all proud of you and my presence here this morning is indicative of the fact that the whole membership of the University Council send you their warm congratulations and their best wishes for your future.

May I thank your parents for what they have done for you. They sacrificed a lot to provide you with a home, love and earthly things like fees and the
necessary requirements for schooling. Above all, I thank them for their guidance and for instilling in you the positive values of hard work and discipline which have enabled you to excel in your studies.

May I also pay tribute to the many donors who have continued to support the university prizes. The presence of so many of you today is a clear testimony of the great importance you attach to the University and its contribution to the world of knowledge and training of skilled manpower. We are grateful for your understanding and support. In these days of
economic hardship, I particularly salute those who have continued to enhance the old prizes to reflect the changing economic realities.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the prizes we are about to award are a mere token meant encourage the competitive spirit among our students in their pursuit of academic excellence. There are a total of 146 awards from 66 donors to be presented to a total of 107 recipients, most of whom are undergraduates.
I am especially pleased to note the excellent performance by our female students from all the faculties including those traditionally considered to be a preserve for men. This goes to show that our ladies are as capable as their male counterparts if given the same opportunities. Ladies, keep up the good work and congratulations.

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, although I do not wish to sound like Oliver Twist, the truth of the matter is that the number of awards is still small compared to the students we would like to reward in future. I
therefore appeal to all of you present today, and others who are not with us here – be they alumni, organisations, firms or individuals to create more endowments and awards with the University of Nairobi. This will greatly enhance the competitiveness of students in their pursuit of knowledge.

Finally, I wish to return to our prize recipients, while I congratulate you for a job well done, I would like to urge you to remember that this is but the beginning of greater things to come. Do not relax in your
endeavour to be the best in whatever you do. You have laid a firm intellectual foundation. Continue to be curious, to enquire, to learn, to push the frontiers of knowledge, to discover new ways of doing things, and to keep yourselves intellectually awake.

I wish you success and I thank you all.