Prof. George Magoha, Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
Other Cabinet Secretaries present
Your Excellencies the Ambassadors and High Commissioners
Principal Secretaries present
Prof. Julia Ojiambo, Chair of Council
Dr. Idle Farah, immediate former Chair of Council
Council Members present
Prof. Isaac Mbeche, Ag. Vice-Chancellor
University staff
Parents and guardians
Distinguished guests and most importantly, graduands,

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Good morning!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to our University and more importantly to the 61st Graduation Ceremony.

Today, also marks the first-year anniversary of the current University Council. I want to appreciate the positive progress that the Council has made on the governance front under the able stewardship of its Chair Prof. Julia Ojiambo.

Over the last few years, our graduands from the colleges of Agriculture & Veterinary Sciences, Architecture & Engineering, Biological and Physical Sciences, Education & External Studies and ODEL campus have burnt the midnight oil to get to this day. For the same reason, the faculty has put in an equal measure of countless work hours over the same period. Administration and support
staff have also been supportive in helping our graduants complete their respective degrees. The story of many of our graduants would be different but for the dedicated support of our parents and guardians, who according to their respective means, have spared no resource to ensure the sustenance of all under their care in this University. Last but not least, today would have been a dream for many of us but for the unwavering support of our greatest benefactor, the government!

I therefore want, in a special way, to appreciate and thank you all here represented for making this day possible.

I also want to take this opportunity to remember the special contribution of our brothers and sisters who have fallen over the past 9 months. As we commiserate with their families, may we remember each of them in our prayers. Let us all arise and observe a moment of silence in their honour.

May their souls rest in perfect peace.

[Thank you. You may be seated]

In the recent past, we have fought tooth and nail to preserve and enhance the image and competitiveness of our University; we have bargained for the best offers possible; we have stood on our truth whenever called upon to do so; we have knocked on many doors seeking advice whenever we felt we had exhausted our wisdom or were quickly running out of steam. Where changes needed to be made for the benefit of the University, we have had the courage to make them; where a little nip here and tack there was necessary, we have done so; where we have been
required to throw our hats in the ring, we have stepped to the plate and staked our claim. Our ashen faces and battle-scarred arms bear testament to the tribulations that we have been through. Yet we have learnt from our failures just as much as we have fortified a stronger union borne of our collective strength. We have stumbled and fallen short of glory a few times. In spite of all these, after all the dust had settled and the tempest rolled away, we the University of Nairobi stood solid as a rock.

Our collective successes notwithstanding, we still have some way to go.

We have some way to go in making our graduates the gold quality of university education. Evidence across the globe suggests that, but for very specialized areas, more and more employers are recruiting graduates for jobs outside their specialty. It is therefore incumbent upon us to create graduates who are more agile; graduates that have a solid understanding of the *hows* of the workplace and how their skills fit into. We need to raise graduates who will continually improve their skills and acquire new ones that make them indispensable. Finally, we need to raise graduates with infinite capacity to think outside the box.

We have some way to go in making our university the home of academic excellence. Available literature suggests that we need to draw trends much earlier and rapidly adjust and readjust our resources accordingly; we need to identify and leverage promising opportunities early thus allowing us the latitude for making small initial investments for greater gain as opposed to making huge investments just to keep up with the joneses; we need to identify and retain our best talents as our investment in

UoN Chancellor's 61st Graduation Ceremony Speech
the future of the University and more importantly we need to articulate and inculcate appropriate corporate culture, cultural norms, shared values and supportive ecosystems across the University.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have some way to go.

We have our engagement with industry to improve; our research capacity to broaden and strengthen; our administration instruments to recalibrate towards better efficiency and effectiveness; our student living conditions to improve; our faculty to internationalize and our financial sustainability to address. We must therefore not rest until we have accomplished all these things.

With goodwill of all our stakeholders, the support and understanding of government, the rededication of all our staff to our mission, the recalibration of our students to academic excellence and character building and the support and sheer zeal of our parents and guardians, I am confident we will get to where we need to be; perched at the very summit of academia in the region, in Africa and with a little push, the world.

Before I conclude, many of you know that we are in a period of transition. I want to thank the Council for its impeccable stewardship of the transition process that has maintained peace and calm against many odds. I want to appreciate the staff unions and student council for your support and understanding, for allowing Council the space and latitude to discharge its governance mandate and for respecting the decisions of Council. I want to commend Prof. Peter Mbithi and Prof. Isaac Mbeche for giving a good account of themselves culminating in a smooth handover
process. Above all, I wish to thank each and every one of you for your fidelity to the letter and spirit of the law. You have reminded all of us that we, holders of public offices across the entire remit of this university, are but trustees and not owners of the same. Understood this way, we know that we serve for a season and that when our season ends, we will hand over the baton humbly and respectfully. I believe that we have set a very high bar for emulation by all, that transitions ought not be noisy and messy.

On my own behalf and that of the entire University, I wish to specially thank our Cabinet Secretary for Education Prof. George Magoha. You have supported this University in more ways than I can enumerate. I want to assure you of our reciprocal support and to continue to wish you well as you discharge the heavy duties that attend your office.

My dear Council, you have a huge burden of responsibility and accountability to discharge. The expectations of the university fraternity in you could not be higher. All who encounter your presence in and around University look up to you for guidance and direction and hope to see in you the values that they aspire for. I beseech thee therefore, to be mindful and conscious of your presence within the University.

Finally my dear graduants, I wish you well in your next phase of life. Just as the University strives for perfection, I pray that you will leverage the stage that the world offers to you today and in the days to come to continue perfecting your knowledge, skills and competence. As opportunities unravel for many of you, I want to invite you to remember your brothers and sisters that may not be so lucky. Hold
their hands and walk with them. Let them not slip into the abyss of hopelessness and desperation so that when their hour in the sun is at hand, they will be ready to take advantage of the sun to make their hay.

“May the Almighty bless you and keep you; may He make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you; may He lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.”

Asanteni sana.