

**VICE CHANCELLOR'S SPEECH DURING THE 64TH GRADUATION CEREMONY  
ON 11TH DECEMBER 2020**

Madam Chancellor, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi, OGW  
Chief Administrative Secretary, Ministry of Education, Mr. Zack Kinuthia,  
Members of Parliament and other state officers present  
Chair of Council of the University of Nairobi, Prof. Julia Ojiambo,  
Chair of the University Alumni and All the Alumni Members,  
Senate, Deans , directors and Members of faculty,  
Prof. Micere Mugo (Online)  
All graduands,  
All stakeholders.  
Online audience ,  
The Media ,  
Distinguished Ladies and gentlemen,

I congratulate all the graduands of class 2020 for completing their studies on time despite the negative effects of Covid-19. In spite of the devastating effects of Covid-19, the University of Nairobi has managed to graduate about 8,000 graduands in the academic year 2019/2020.

I salute the faculty for making frantic efforts to ensure that all students who have completed their studies are given the opportunity to graduate. This graduation is a historic one. It coincides with our golden Jubilee celebrations occurring when we are celebrating fifty years of academic excellence. It marks the end of an era and the beginning of a newer chapter for the University. The March to relevance, Vibrancy and Sustainability has just begun. It is my vision that together with the stakeholders we shall join efforts in building a world-class institution that is well resourced and impacts on the community through research outputs and community service.

Madam Chancellor

Our staff and students have shown a lot of commitment and have worked hard to overcome a number of challenges since the year began. Holding two successful virtual graduations is for us a big victory over this monster called Covid-19.

I want to advise our graduands that the degrees that you are about to obtain are not mere papers! They represent the qualification and skills that they have acquired at the University of Nairobi. They symbolize your readiness to serve the community. The world today requires that you have more than a degree qualification. You must also acquire requisite soft skills to succeed at work or in entrepreneurship. Your attitude will definitely play a critical role in your success or failure. In the words of Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States of America, " Nothing can stop the man with the right attitude from achieving his goal. Nothing on earth can help the man with the wrong attitude.

The University has opened your eyes and your parents have done their part. It is now your turn to give back to your community. It is time to serve your country with dedication and integrity. Integrity is a virtue that we in the academia cherish and I am satisfied that we have imparted the desired values on you. In this era of great deficiency of integrity in our country, we shall always be proud of our Alumni who promote integrity and ethical values wherever they are.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The covid-19 experience has taught us many lessons:

One is that Technology-especially ICT will play an important role in the economy in future. It is important for the faculty and the students of the University of Nairobi to be responsive to the changes in technology and ensure that they adapt as quickly as possible.

Secondly –We have learned the power of science. Science can solve most of our societal problems including diseases and therefore priority should be given to

the STEM subjects. We need the infrastructure and resources to train more Doctors, more Engineers, Agriculturalist, Innovators etcetra otherwise our society will continue to lag behind in development. It will not be possible to achieve our vision 2030 targets and the Sustainable development goals.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The University marked its golden Jubilee yesterday .We had the opportunity to celebrate our achievements and to reflect on areas that we have not done better.

We acknowledge that we have done well in inspiring and motivating our faculty, and students.

We also acknowledge that have occasionally through unfair administrative processes killed the hope of young people, the very students whom we are expected to inspire and give hope to. We have done very well in research outputs but we have not done well in commercialization of our research outputs to generate revenue to the University and the researchers. Research is one area that the University can leverage on to attract more funding and create impacts. My administration is keen on maximizing on the opportunities that exist in this untapped field.

Madam Chancellor,

In spite of the COVID health crisis, we have together with our research collaborators attracted research grants worth === dollars, equivalent to Kenya shillings=====

In future, we want to work with the industry to create a conducive environment for incubation of innovations. We shall support start-ups by faculty and students so that we can commercialize them and make the University an innovation hub act like centers for practical learning.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In order to sustain our reform agenda we have initiated new policies and review obsolete ones because for reforms to succeed you need a strong policy and legal framework.

This year alone we developed a number of policies which the council have considered and also approved. I want to thank the Council and the Senate for supporting reforms through progressive policies. This year we have initiated and operationalized the following policies:

Policy on transport

Policy on Whistle blowing to help us fight corruption at the place of work

Policy on Disability mainstreaming

Policy on students progression to help in tracking students progression and make positive interventions to help students complete their studies on time.

The students code of conduct to regulate student behavior in campus to help in improving standards of discipline among students.

The policy on virtual interviews to allow the University to conduct interviews using online platforms.

The Housing Policy

Policy on promotion criteria of academic staff to enhance objectivity in promotions and staff recognition.

The rules and regulations for Virtual students elections that enabled us to conduct successful Student elections.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have a new student leadership that came into office through a transparent and fair virtual elections. We have begun to witness an era where students are becoming more responsible. They are becoming more democratic and the election outcomes are more respected by contestants than before when election outcomes were contested and marred by violence and disorder. I believe Kenya can learn more from our student elections.

Since we are training better leaders for the future, we want a responsible student leadership that will bring the student community together and support the vision of the University. We want student leaders who bring issues to the table and help in finding solutions and not those who run to the road to stone their parents and innocent Kenyans for no apparent reason.

I believe that when we have a responsible faculty and disciplined student community, we shall be able to attract high caliber staff from across the globe and more international students to achieve the desired level of internationalization.

Ladies and gentlemen,

You recall what I mentioned yesterday that the University of Nairobi was founded through partnership and has continued to thrive and excel on the spirit of partnership. As we head into the future, I want to give confidence to our partners and collaborators that we shall work in concert with them to improve the infrastructure for learning and accommodation of this university to comparable global standards.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to congratulate our chair of Council, Prof. Julia Ojiambo and Professor Micere Mugo who will be conferred with honorary degrees for their distinguished and selfless service to the society in the course of their careers. These are two great women that the University of Nairobi has mentored. Speaking to a graduation congregation 1970 at this very great court, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta then chancellor said this :

“ To those who are graduating, or will graduate from this University, I would say this. Never forget the opportunity that has been created by your fellow citizens. Practice the act of modesty and recognize your limitations. Exert all your efforts to help your country and your people and let your work bring honour to this University”.

These two women are a true reflection of What Mzee Jomo Kenyatta expected from our graduates. They embody our philosophy of excellence.

Congratuatioms to all graduands and May God bless you.

PROF.KIAMA GITAHI  
VICE CHANCELLOR