



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH BY PROF. GEORGE A.O. MAGOHA, VICE-
CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI DURING
THE 52nd GRADUATION CEREMONY ON DECEMBER
5, 2014 AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT**

- **Prof. Collete Suda, PS, Education, Science & Technology**
- **Chancellor, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi**
- **Former Chancellor Dr. J. B. Wanjui**
- **Chancellors and VCs from sister Universities**
- **Chairman of Council, Dr. Idle Farah**
- **UoN Council, Management and Senate**
- **H.E. Ambassadors and High Commissioners**
- **The incoming Vice-Chancellor Prof. Peter Mbithi**
- **Parents and Graduands**
- **Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen**

I wish to start by thanking the Almighty God for having given me the opportunity to serve this University as Vice-Chancellor for the past ten years without losing any academic time.

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to the University of Nairobi and in particular to the 52nd congregation of the University of Nairobi. I also take this opportunity to congratulate the graduands for their hard work, without whom, this occasion would not have taken place. This is the 20th and last of the graduation ceremonies presided over by myself.

The government has now identified my successor after a competitive process. He is Prof. Peter Felix Mulwa Mbithi who has been my loyal deputy in charge of Administration and Finance for the 10 years. He is well versed with University policies, systems and strategic plan and spearheaded ISO, Performance Contracting and national Universities industrial relations negotiations which he chaired for 10 years among many others. I congratulate him, and wish him the very best and God's grace, blessings and guidance. I also urge the Chancellor, Council, Management, Senate, Staff and Students

to support him to steer this University to greater heights. This he shall definitely achieve through teamwork and our strategic plan 2013-2018 which was approved by Senate, Management and Council. On my part I want to thank him most sincerely for his total support during the past 10 years and even during the most challenging times.

Madam Chancellor, this Congregation is featuring graduands mainly from the: Colleges of Health Sciences, and Humanities and Social Sciences, and some from the other colleges who for one reason or another did not make the 51st graduation

ceremony held in August. From a professional perspective, the congregation is releasing into the market: medical doctors, pharmacists, dentists, nurses, lawyers, economists, business executives and social scientists, among others.

The graduates are being passed out at different levels comprising of 2 Honorary doctorates, 104 PhDs, 2700 Masters, 5150+ Bachelors degrees among others. This year we have graduated a total of 13,700 graduates including 124 PhDs, 3330 Masters and 8000 Bachelors among others. This number adds up to the over 165,335 graduates of

the past 51 congregations, making the University of Nairobi the largest single contributor to the human resource capacity building in this country.

This 52nd graduation will bring the total to over 95,000 graduates that we have conferred with degrees and diplomas in the last 10 years comprising; 7 honorary degrees, 3 DSc's, over 500 PhDs, over 19,000 Masters and 60,000 bachelors. This is phenomenal growth and represents 58% of all graduates from the University over the last fifty years. Thus the contribution to capacity building for realizing development needs of the country and

worldwide, can be felt through the high number of our quality graduates. Our students are tutored and mentored by highly qualified professional staff including of 153 Professors, 276 Associate Professors who comprise over 1700 highly qualified academic staff. These members of staff have been responsible for teaching, research and dissemination of academic work, and I am very happy and privileged to have worked with this team for the last ten years. As a matter of fact, through their efforts, we have managed to grow

our research fund to over KES 4 billion up from KES 350 million, 10 years ago.

This year Dr. Jared Mecha of the academic department of Clinical Medicine and Therapeutics raised \$5.3 million as part of the CRISS Project that is conducting research in the health sector and secured the renewal of another US\$4.2 million for another health sector research project at the College of Health Sciences. I wish to commend the Principal, College of Health Sciences, Prof. Isaac Kibwage for a job well done. Other leading research fundraisers in the University over the last

10 years have included Prof. Omu Anzala from KAVI, Prof. James Kiarie from the department of Obs and Gyn, Prof. Elizabeth Ngugi from Centre for HIV Prevention and Research (CHIVR), Profs. Ruth Nduati and Elizabeth Obimbo from the department of Paediatrics and Child Health, Prof. Walter Jaoko from the department of Medical Microbiology, Prof. Patricia Kameri-Mbote from the School of Law, Prof. Winnie Mitullah from IDS, Profs. Paul Kimani and Nancy Karanja from Faculty of Agriculture; Profs. Tim Waema and Wagacha Waiganjo from the School of Computing and Informatics; and Prof.

Daniel Olago and Dr. David Odongo of the department of Geology, School of Biological Sciences among others. I wish to acknowledge the researchers for their effort and to encourage other researchers within the University to maintain their leveraging of resources for enhancing the research portfolio of the University of Nairobi.

With regard to PhD supervisors this year, the highest number (60) is from the College of Humanities and Social Sciences followed by the College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences with (20) PhDs. The most improved Colleges are

the College of Architecture and Engineering (CAE) with 5 PhDs and the College of Health Sciences with 14 PhDs this year. The most prolific supervisors of PhDs this year include Prof. Ganesh Pokhariyal from School of Mathematics with 8 PhDs; Prof. Peter K'Obonyo and Dr. Zachary Awino from School of Business with 7 PhDs each, Profs. Martin Ogutu and Francis Kibera and Dr. Vincent Machuki from School of Business with 6 PhDs each; and, Prof. Erasmus Kaijage, and Dr. Josiah Aduda from School of Business with 5 PhDs each.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today the University is also conferring honorary doctorates to two distinguished Kenyans who have offered outstanding service in different sectors. We will honour Dr. Vijoo Rattansi the Chancellor of this University with a Doctor of Humane Letters (Honoris Causa) for her philanthropy and charitable work particularly in Education. We will also confer Mr. Samuel Macharia with Doctor of Letters (honoris causa), for his achievements, particularly in business, community service and targeted support to the University of Nairobi. He was

instrumental in streamlining the procurement process, the establishment of a computerized financial management system that has saved the university billions of shillings and introducing corporate time management of university affairs. The two honorary doctorates are among the seven that have been awarded to different individuals for their outstanding contributions to the University and society in the last 10 years.

During the last congregation, I noted the sterling performance that the University of Nairobi has posted in the recent Webometric Ranking. Our

outstanding performance confirmed our long held view that the University of Nairobi is the gold standard of the region after emerging top in the region and position 9 in Africa ahead of all regional universities for the second time in six months. Indeed, only 6 universities from South Africa and two from Egypt were ahead of us. This performance Madam Chancellor, is a climax of the great work by our staff and students in their academic pursuit; thus raising the visibility of the University worldwide. It also vindicates the strategic management systems that we have

consciously put in place for the last 10 years and which are now bearing fruit. This improved performance is a build up to other excellent results that we have recorded in the past, especially in performance contracting. Currently, the University of Nairobi holds the Excellent rank, in the public sector performance contracting, a standing that has never been attained by any public entity, since the introduction of public sector reforms in 2004. The School of Law also led in the continental moot court competition hosted by the University this year, thus affirming its

position as a leading law school in the continent. On the other hand, the College of Health Sciences was recognized by the East African Legislative Assembly as a centre of excellence in addressing different emerging challenges in the health sector in the region. On behalf of the University Senate, I take this opportunity to congratulate all our staff and in particular the Principal, College of Health Sciences Prof. Isaac Kibwage, for their excellent performance and urge them to improve on these international standards.

Madam Chancellor the University has experienced a lot of gains occasioned by the restructuring that has been put in place in the last 10 years. Worth mentioning is the strict fiscal discipline that management adopted after years of underfunding that had taken its toll on the statutory obligations of the University. We owed creditors over KES 1.4 billion. This was against the backdrop of reduced government funding which has stood at less than 40 percent of our annual budget, in the last 10 years. We managed to clear these arrears and as I

speak, the University is upto date with its financial obligations with a budget of Ksh.20 million.

This improved state of affairs was due to the management's commitment to our strategy that among other things laid emphasis on the growth of the University revenues through more enrolments, research grants and above all, prudent management of resources. In this regard, I would like to thank my managers and members of staff, for having stood with me during this transformation period, albeit, with some difficulties.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the benefits of our frugal management of our scarce resources over the last 10 years has paid dividends. We not only managed to complete our stalled infrastructural projects of the 1990s, but we have also managed to initiate new ones. All our campuses now boast of new projects and internet connectivity initiated or completed in the last 10 years. Cumulatively, we have spent over KES 4 billion on these projects. This investment is expected to rise sharply by KES 2.8 Billion, with the completion of the ongoing construction of the 22 floor University Towers -

now on 21st floor and set for completion next year. We were able to raise internationally a further grant of KES 152 million towards the completion of the Towers, and our fund raising efforts are ongoing. Another more than KES 500 million will also be spent on the ongoing projects at the College of Health Sciences and Kisumu Campus. However, for this University to have the capacity to absorb the increasing need for higher education in the country, more quality facilities are required to support academic and social welfare of our students. To meet these needs, the University

plans to construct hostels to accommodate more than 5,000 students on a five acre piece of land next to the Fairview Hotel. This project will be financed under the Public Private Partnership model, and plans for its commencement are at an advanced stage. We have also lined up the construction of the School of Law Tower at the Parklands Campus, to house the increasing academic activities and offer a modern learning legal environment that is commensurate with the status of the School and affirm its position, among other leading law schools, worldwide.

Ladies and Gentlemen, during my tenure as the Vice-Chancellor, I have enjoyed a good relationship with both our student and staff unions, amid some disagreements, on occasions. Not only did this lead to a better working environment for the mutual benefit of all but it also led to better resolution of conflicts. As a word of advice, though, I urge all unions to respect the rights of others, while fighting for their rights. On a few occasions, the University business has been unnecessarily disrupted by matters that are external to the institution. This unfortunate state

of affairs does not auger well for the image of the University, besides interfering with the normal running of university activities. Our sword and shield should remain dialogue, as this university belongs to all of us and disruptive activities will not help us at all.

I am also grateful for the support that I have received from the present and the previous government and particularly for the non interference in the internal affairs of the University. I have been privileged to work under seven different ministers of higher education, and

their support has been phenomenal. I however urge the government to extend this support in providing more capitation to the University to at least cater for the payroll so that the university can free its funds for development projects. As it stands, the University supplements its payroll to the tune of KES 300 million every month. This situation is not sustainable as the wage bill grows every year and the traditional source of revenue, which is fees from Module II programmes, will soon plateau. The government consider implementing unit cost in higher education.

Universities offering courses that require more resources should be financed at a level that is commensurate to their running costs, as opposed to uniform funding for all government sponsored students. If adopted, unit cost based funding will plug in the deficit, that has continually affected universities offering courses that require a lot of investment in learning materials and personnel.

Ladies and gentlemen, as the University strategizes on growth, it has not been left out on the corporate social responsibility front. I am happy to report that, the university has partnered

with different stakeholders to play its role as a corporate citizen. We have been active in providing free legal clinics to members of the public, free medical camps, environment conservation and we have also made our contribution to the less fortunate members in our society. Last month, the University Community made a contribution of KES 5 million to support the Beyond Zero Campaign spearheaded by the First Lady, H.E. Margaret Kenyatta; a campaign that is meant to fight maternal and child mortality. This is testament

that the University is greatly values community service as one of its core objectives.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am at the close of my tenure as Vice-Chancellor. I am grateful to many stakeholders who have played a leading role in ensuring that I delivered on the objectives of this great university. I am particularly grateful to the former Chancellor, Dr. Joseph Barrage Wanjui, and the Chairmen of Council, the late Prof. David Wasawo and Dr. John Nyangeri Simba for their wise counsel, particularly as the university underwent various structural and transformational

changes in my first term of service. Most of the achievements that we are seeing today could not have been possible without the guidance of these gentlemen. The current Chancellor Dr. Vijoo Rattansi and Chairman Dr. Idle Farah have continued to offer full support and guidance to University management, and I thank them sincerely. To my students and members of staff, I enjoyed your support and understanding. Most importantly the support I received from management particularly the members of the University Senate and the University Management

Board, and students leaders was critical in moving this university forward. In particular I am grateful for the loyalty and support of my four deputies, Prof. P. Mbithi, Prof. I. Mbeche, Prof. L. Irungu and Prof. H. Mutoro; all the College Principals and their Deputies, the Chief Finance Officer, Mr. Michael Karue, the Chief Legal Officer, Ms. Rebecca Ngondo and the Chief Internal Auditor, Mr. P. Igiria.

Finally, I am very grateful to my family, who remain the strongest pillar in my life and whose contribution to my successful stewardship of the University remains invaluable. I treasure your

understanding and support as you endured my long absence while on official duty.

With those remarks, it is now my pleasure to welcome the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Science and Technology to address you. Thank you.