



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH OF DR. VIJOO RATTANSI, CHANCELLOR,
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI DURING THE 54TH GRADUATION
CEREMONY HELD ON FRIDAY DECEMBER 4, 2015 AT THE
CHANCELLOR'S COURT AT 8:00 A.M.**

- **The Cabinet Secretary, Education, Science and Technology, Dr. Fred Matiang'i**
- **The Vice Chancellor, University of Nairobi, Prof. Peter M.F. Mbithi**

- **Your Excellences, the Ambassadors and High Commissioners**
- **Chancellors of Sister Universities**
- **Chairman of the University of Nairobi Council, Dr. Idle Farah**
- **Members of the University Council**
- **Chairpersons of other University Councils**
- **Vice-Chancellors of Sister Universities**
- **Members of the University Management Board**
- **University of Nairobi Senate**
- **Graduands**
- **Staff**
- **Students**
- **Parents and Guardians**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is a great honour for me to welcome our new cabinet secretary, Dr. Fred Matiangi to our fraternity. We shall hold his hand and support him. I must say that you are joining a team of very able, matured, dedicated and eminent leaders.

2 years ago, His Excellency the President deemed me worthy of the crown of Chancellor of this University. That day I made a solemn vow that this crown would only be worn in honour and glory. I invoked upon this great and noble undertaking, the blessings of the Almighty that I should never fall short when strength and courage were called into service.

2 years on, I must confess that perhaps 2015 will go down in history as the toughest year in the life of this University. In the pursuit of individual power, prosperity and influence,

some of us have lost the ethos of team play. Our collective good and aspirations as a University have been sacrificed at the altar of self-aggrandizement.

The drums of war have beaten for far too long! The sting and clash of battle have hardened all of us. The indoctrination of building selves while tearing institutions down should never become the norm. We should never wilfully stand counted amongst those who, having eyes, see not, and having ears, hear not, the things that concern their very existence. Ultimately, there is a place and a time for the captain to lead just as there is a place and a time to be led. We may have taken the long way home but we have finally navigated the stormy sea; the calmer shores are now upon us.

It is essential that now and again that we restate the wisdom of our founding; not merely to refute the naysayers' claims but also to sustain the hearts of all those who bear unwavering conviction that no part of the guilt of any collateral blood shed should bear on the collective conscience of the University. The pride in the University's court of arms must be restored. Let us awaken the roar of the lion that stands for our dignity; let us roll in the grace of the giraffe and the sartorial elegance of the crested crane; let us reaffirm the place of courage and vision; let us defend independent thought; let us defend academic freedom and keep lit the torches we bear in providing education for all people; let us renew the meaning of truth, peace and mutual respect; and let's together live by the wisdom of our motto, *unitate et labore*, unity and work.

In all we do, let us guard our steps; let us measure our words that we may never choke when forced to swallow them. Let us tread carefully the fine line between sinning by silence and proclaiming sainthood by casting the first stone. Let us be careful that we do not yield to the culture of crying wolf or giving a dog a bad name if just to try to hang it! Wisdom is never abhorrent of forgiveness. A prodigal son who swallows his pride, pronounces *errare humanum est* and asks for forgiveness will be forgiven. If we always speak ill of our homes, sooner rather than later someone is bound to ask how far the apple that spaketh ill fell from the tree. Like the gambler, we have to know when to hold, know when to fold, know when to walk away and know when to run.

Allow me also to thank the University of Nairobi Council under the able leadership of Dr. Idle Farah. I am sure the saying uneasy lies the head that wears a crown has never been more fitting than for this Council during this transition

period for Quietly doing their duties with a lot of love and passion and standing up for this noble cause without much ado.

I wish to thank our VC and all our dedicated Professors, Lecturers, Students and well wishers for their continued support to the leadership of this university.

My beloved graduands, let me now address you.

I am extremely proud of you. After several years of painstaking study and diligent research, today you don the black academic gown and a hood. . In the face of many challenges, you have stayed the course. You have attained scholarly achievement and justified all we looked for when calling you to the great commission of knowledge advancement. Today is the day to refresh, in your hearts and minds, the dream for a beautiful and wonderful future. Let your hearts not be discouraged by what has transpired in this

University. The universe will never fall short of opportunities for leaders without a title. Your wisdom will be put to the test in the corporate world. Your stewards will be more discreet yet more ruthless and less tolerant than we are in this University. You will be threatened and defied, but you will not be vanquished. You will stand unbowed with your heads held high. Be of good cheer. Your alma mater is proud of you and your achievements.

If you should remember anything from this graduation, take heed of my advice to you paraphrased from the greatNapoleone Bonaparte's address to his army at the beginning of the Italian Campaign in March 1796.

Graduands, Government owes you much and can give you nothing. The patience and courage you have shown in the midst of all the heavy demands are admirable; but they gain you no renown; no glory results to you

from your endurance. Onward then you march into the most fertile plains of the world. Rich provinces and great cities will be in your power. There you will find honour, glory, and wealth. I wish that you will neither be found wanting in courage, perseverance or upright morals. In the face of endless opportunities for both ill and good, your moral compass must always stay true to its North so as to guide you to do right.

My devout hope is that as long as this University exists, it will embody the words so aptly inscribed in the University visitor's book by the person of Pope Francis; that the University of Nairobi should always exist for truth and common good.

God bless the University of Nairobi, God bless you all and your families and God bless Kenya.

**DR. VIJOO RATTANSI,
CHANCELLOR,
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**