



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**SPEECH BY DR. VIJOO RATTANSI, OGW,  
CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI  
DURING THE 59<sup>th</sup> GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON  
FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 14, 2018 AT THE CHANCELLOR'S  
COURT AT 8:00 A.M.**

**The Cabinet Secretary Ministry of Education, Amb. (Dr) Amina Mohamed,  
The Principal Secretary State Department for University Education Prof. Collette Suda,  
Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Peter Mulwa Mbithi,  
University of Nairobi Council led by the Chair, Prof. Julia Ojiambo,  
Your Excellencies the Ambassadors & High Commissioners,  
Chancellors from other Universities,  
University staff,  
invited guests,  
family, friends and most importantly, graduants;**

**Good morning!**

**I am indeed delighted to preside over today's graduation.**

**We are grateful to be graced by the presence of Cabinet Secretary of our line Ministry, Amb. Amina Mohammed. On my own behalf and that of the entire University, let me convey our most heartfelt gratitude for the support that you and your team at the Ministry continue to accord us despite the many pressing needs of your office.**

**This is also the first time in a long time that has been graced by a wholly and fully constituted University Council. I want to thank the CS for instituting the process leading to the appointment of this Council. I wish to take just a minute to welcome, appreciate and acknowledge the presence of all council members: Prof. Julia Ojiambo, Ms. Wanjiku Muchemi, Ms. Flora Mtuweta Mighulo Mghanga, Dr. Jocelyn Marie Rarieya, Mr. Hassan Abdi Mohamud, Mr. Isaac Chebon Kiprop and respective representatives of the Principal Secretaries for National Treasury and Ministry of Education Mr. Samuel Kiiruand Dr. Kevit Desai. Please feel at home.**

**At the very onset, let it be on record that as Chancellor, I wish you the very best as you roll up your sleeves and**

**embark on the journey that will provide the University the much-deserved stewardship. I am delighted to have you, the captains of this ship, on board. I have great faith in you as I believe you have in yourselves. I do not have any doubt that you are in every shed cut out for the task at hand. I can only promise that the going will be tough, but I want to encourage you...No matter the enormity of the challenges, keep at it, keep moving, be steadfast and success will surely follow you.**

**I want to reassure you that you join a good family at this University. It is a family that despite loving its academic freedom almost to a fault, will welcome and support you to deliver on your mandate. Together we will take the University to higher heights I am confident wherever you look, you will find all the support you need. You will hear many things from many people...be keen to listen, slow to act. Pray for wisdom to discern facts from fiction. My door will always be open should you need me. Once more, to you the Council, *karibuni nyumbani*.**

**This graduation happens to be a special one for me as well. It is the 10<sup>th</sup> graduation that I am presiding over as Chancellor. Despite the fury of angry seas, we have steadied the ship and stayed the course. Along the way we have built the much-needed stamina, resilience and fortitude. In the face of many adversities, we stand proud and unbowed.**

**We acknowledge the resource challenges that we continue to experience as a public university. Capitation continues to be a huge challenge to all public universities. Improving the outcome quality of our graduates continues to be a standing commitment. We have seen closure of satellite campuses for failing to meet the accreditation requirements. I have also read from the press proposals attributed to the Commission for University Education to merge several universities to create regional universities or close others which have become operationally unsustainable. I have read of proposals to review university fees to reflect market**

**realities. All these proposals, as far reaching as some may be, seem to suggest that we have come to an inflection point; a point where we ask how as a country we intend to run and finance higher education. It is a good point to be at and I am sure these proposals will generate lots of discussions. In the short term, some painful measures may of necessity be instituted. In the long term, our collective resolve to augment government capitation with alternative resources coupled with superior operational efficiency will yield expected results. It will be a long road, but determinedly we will tread this unbeaten path to get there.**

**At the advent of independence, *mzee* Jomo Kenyatta and his administration set out to fight hunger, poverty, disease and ignorance. Many years after independence, we have made significant progress but still largely struggle with these selfsame ills. I believe if ever there was a better cohort of graduates armed to hew a nation of hope from these mountains of challenges, then this is it! We have graduates from the College of Education and External Studies armed with the best tools to put paid to our nation's ignorance; We have graduates from College of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences imbued with the skills and competencies to improve agricultural yields and contain post-harvest losses through deployment of state of art crop yield and land usage technologies; We have the graduates from College of Architecture and Engineering with the wherewithal to design, construct and manage low cost housing for the masses, design cost effective plant and machinery for value addition to agricultural produce and mass production of other industrial inputs and develop the industries that will usher Kenya into the league of developed nations; We have graduates from the College of Biological and Physical Sciences, gifted with the ability to harness and configure science, technology and innovation and elevate humanity to the realms of the deity. What we have here is a cohort of graduates that together in tandem can push the envelope of development to hitherto unknown frontiers.**

**Kenya, like most developing countries, will continue to experience challenges over the foreseeable future in absorbing a significant number of youth and graduates by extension into employment. We must therefore perpetually challenge ourselves to think outside the box. Over the years, we have stressed the need for graduates to look into making good use of their acquired skills for solving societal problems. We have also implored graduates to tap into the synergies of divergent disciplines to found corporate consortiums that in future will metamorphose into global corporate conglomerates. This will move the job creation agenda forward for the future benefit of our nation's economy. In line with this thought on job creation, let me thank most sincerely our partners from industry who employ our graduates. Your continuous absorption is testament to the fact that this University still does the right things and does them the right way.**

**Let me conclude by telling you a story about a *bodaboda* rider I recently spoke with. Wambua from remote parts of Eastern Kenya. He dropped out of the school for not performing very well in class. He was a man of ordinary means...eking a living as a subordinate staff at a firm in industrial area earning a monthly salary of 20,000 shillings. He lived in a house whose rent was 3,000 shillings per month. One day he woke up and thought to himself, "Shall I condemn myself to this life of meagre existence, living from hand to mouth on monthly basis? How will I school my children? How will I help my extended family? How will I save for retirement?" One day he had had enough...he walked into a bank with his savings and secured a loan to buy a motorbike. He then walked back to his employer and tendered his resignation. From that day forward he dared to change his life. Without the comfort of a monthly salary, failure was not an option available to Wambua. He changed his attitude and beliefs that he was of child of a lesser God and was in this life to make it or to die trying.**

**Today, three years of sacrifice later, he is the owner of 5 motorcycles. He moved from the 3,000 shillings house to a better address for his family. He says he now pays 7,000 shillings and has never defaulted on rent. He has employed 2 of his brothers and two of his friends. He saves 2,000 shillings per day and can afford to secure quality education for his children and is working hard to secure his retirement. He has also set up a stationery supplies company which supplies he delivers to his customers with his motorbikes at a subsidized cost. He now wants to improve his service delivery and expand his supplies market. For this reason he has signed up for a marketing course at a local college which he attends three times a week and will complete end of 2019. This is a story I hope to follow over the many years to come.**

**The moral of this real-life story ladies and gentlemen is a very simple one...keep dreaming. Settle not for less that you deem yourself worthy. Nelson Mandela was right in saying that “there is no passion to be found playing small - in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.” Be ready to pay the price that’s needed to realize your dreams. As you move ahead in life, don’t do it alone. Let each of us hold another’s hand, teach one and lift one! Don’t just aspire to make a living...aspire to make a difference!**

**99% of our graduates will walk the beaten path. I want to challenge you to be the 1% that will move the world. I want you to challenge the *status quo*, I want you to embrace life with an open mind and seize all opportunities as they come. No job is too low for you and none is too high. You can make it in any sphere of life provided you arm yourself with the right attitude.**

**Graduates, I thank you in a special way for bringing us together. Success as you know has many fathers. Without your hard work, focus and dedication, neither you, your friends, parents and/or guardians nor us would have graced**

**this occasion. As you go into the world, go in peace. Remember, that wherever you go, you carry with you our good name. Guard it jealously so that wherever you may walk, people will know and appreciate where you came from. Be your brothers' keepers...alert them to any opportunities that may make good use of their skills and expertise. It may not pay much today, but if you work smart, stay focused and keep an open mind, a day will come when you will have more than enough.**

**I wish to thank the faculty that have made this possible. I know you may at times be tempted to feel inadequately appreciated. We value you. We are because you are. To the non-teaching staff, *asanteni sana* for your selfless service. You do oft the invisible work without which none of the events we celebrate at the University would be possible. To the parents and guardians, we thank you for supporting your children with resources. You have the unenviable task of being the right role models. In a world where we have scarcity of quality role models, charity must now begin from home. You must shape your children how you mean they progress in life.**

**May God's blessings go with and stay with each and every one of us as we embark on the tough assignment of nation building. May God bless you and may He bless Kenya.**