



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

Office of the Vice Chancellor

Prof. S.G. Kiama, BVM, MSc, (Nairobi), PhD, (Bern), MKNAS

Email: vc@uonbi.ac.ke
Website: vc.uonbi.ac.ke

Tel: +254-020-4910000,
DL: +254-020-4913002/3
P.O. Box 30197 - 00100 - GPO
Nairobi, Kenya

September 23, 2022

VICE CHANCELLOR PROF. STEPHEN KIAMA'S SPEECH DURING 67TH GRADUATION CEREMONY ON 23RD SEPTEMBER 2022 AT TAIFA HALL, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

It is my distinct pleasure and honor to welcome you all to this 67th graduation ceremony of the University of Nairobi.

I wish to congratulate all the 3553 graduands who will be conferred with various degrees and diplomas by the Chancellor, Dr. Vijoo Rattansi this morning after having satisfied the committee of examiners and senate for the awards. The University and no doubt your families are very proud of your achievements.



ISO
9001:2015
CERTIFIED

Quality Management System Excellence in University Education and Training

Madam Chancellor, the graduates that the senate will present to you shortly have been provided with the necessary knowledge in their respective disciplines, as well as skills for discovery. These fine men and women have received adequate mentorship from this Institution that no will give them an edge over their peers.

They have been equipped well enough to succeed. They shall succeed. We have equipped them with the skills and knowledge for subduing/ conquering the earth. They shall not sit back and complain when they encounter new challenges but will draw from what they have been taught to offer solutions.

The University of Nairobi is proud to produce solution providers. They join a long list of members of the University of Nairobi Convocation. The membership is permanent. Through these members of the convocation, the University has contributed immensely to the social and economic transformation of this country. The country is better because we are. We labor every day in Unity to fulfill this desire. To make the country better.

Our graduates are at the forefront of providing solutions to food security, protection of the environment, combating diseases, containing locust invasions, providing sustainable housing, and dealing with problems of climate change among others. Madam Chancellor, as a testimony of the relevance of the University of Nairobi, our alumni have continued to be entrusted with various leadership positions in this country and globally. The current president of the Republic of Kenya, H.E. William Samoei Ruto is our alumni. The current deputy president, the current Speakers of Parliament that is the National Assembly and Senate as well as the President and all the judges of the supreme court are from this University. There can never be a clearer endorsement of our training. We produce problem solvers. Those who are ready to subdue the earth.

Madam Chancellor, you recall that we honored one of our own, Prof. Wangari Maathai with an Institute devoted to Environmental Governance and Peace, The Wangari Maathai Institute for Peace and Environmental Studies.

Prof. Wangari Maathai as a lone voice in the desert championed the need to protect our environment for several years before the world noticed and joined her. Madam Chancellor, Prof. Richard Samson Odingo who served as the Vice Chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) for about 20 years was also a scholar from this University. In 2007, IPCC together with Al Gore, former US Vice President were awarded a Nobel peace prize for their efforts to build up and disseminate greater knowledge about man-made climate change, and to lay the foundation for the measures that are needed to counteract such change". Again and again, we have produced the best. You may wonder, how do we do this? We have a human resource that is well trained. The Professors, the technical staff, the administrators, and the support staff as a team. The environment and support services at the University of Nairobi are very conducive to skills, knowledge development, discovery, and mentorship.

Today Madam Chancellor as a demonstration of the University's Commitment to the protection of the Environment, and informed by our commitment to conquering the earth, we shall present to you one who has demonstrated the values and philosophy of the University of Nairobi for an honorary degree, Dr. Patrick Verkooijen. Dr. Verkooijen is a champion of Climate change adaptation. Congratulations Patrick! I am glad also to announce that Dr. Verkooijen has also accepted to serve as a distinguished Chair of the Wangari Maathai Institute, an honorary position.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is the third year of the implementation of our five-point reform agenda which I shared in early 2020. When we realized that the University was faced with real danger of extinction, we chose not to sit back and complain. We have made bold sacrifices and endured some pain to secure the University and return it to a trajectory of relevance, vibrancy, and sustainability. Allow me to use an allegory of a burning house. The house was burning. We have somehow put off the fire. Unfortunately, there are still embers, dangerous embers.

We cannot afford to sit and rest; the fire may be back with an even bigger vengeance. The Senate and council are fully aware of this. When we began putting off the fire, people were asking. Have you done the cost-benefit analysis? How much will you save from the said reforms? Madam Chancellor, I am not so sure that even in business school they teach the approach to take when you need to deal with a house on fire. We, therefore, did the best we could. That is to begin to put off the fire. History, I believe will judge us fairly. Nevertheless, I can confirm today that our efforts have not been in vain. We are now combing through the data to establish the exact financial saving from the interventions we undertook. Our estimates to date reveal a cumulatively cost saving of Kenya shillings 8.2 billion in 3 years. If no interventions were made the University would be in a very bad state today. As you may recall, our interventions were multifaceted, some were more pronounced and painful and therefore associated with a commotion that threatened to consume the University while others were subtle. Interestingly, madam Chancellor, it is those changes that were subtle that have brought the most dividends in the short term.

The most painful interventions were aimed at laying the foundations of a more sustainable, vibrant, and relevant University and bringing about huge cost-cutting in the long term. We are already receiving testimonies from within and without on the benefits of these interventions. Both staff and students now appreciate the actions that we undertook. Permit me Madam Chancellor to mention some of the actions we undertook. We did the following:

- Reduced wastages and leakages in our financial system.
- Carried out effective staff redeployment, rationalized workload, and automated most of our processes.
- Re-engineered and automated our financial processes
- Enhanced use of technology in the delivery of services –e-library resources, online meetings, online teaching and learning, and paperless operations.
- Exited and terminated all leases from rented premises

- Shifted our publicity and marketing from mainstream print and broadcast to the use of social media and websites.
- Rationalized administrative unit and eradicated duplications of functions
- Suspended new appointments unless in critical areas
- Rationalized program offerings to focus on our flagship programs

Madam Chancellor, it is important to note that these financial gains continue to be eroded by unfinanced collective bargaining agreements, underfunded differentiated Unit Cost and enhanced doctors' allowances. For example, the last CBA would have resulted in an increase of about Kshs 1.6 billion on our payroll in the financial year 2022/23. However, the University of Nairobi's capitation was reduced instead of being enhanced. The University of Nairobi is a very strategic entity for this country.

It is my hope that the government will see the need to support the initiatives we have undertaken and provide the resources needed for the University to carry out its mandate.

Madam Chancellor, the University is about people, the students, the members of staff, the alumni, the collaborators, and the suppliers. For the University to continue to carry out its mandate we must make targeted strategic interventions that focus on people.

The people reforms are going to be guided by the philosophy for the need to inspire and connect with the Kenyan community, to provide leadership and stewardship, and to give hope and faith to the Kenyan society that it can excel in whatever it chooses to do with passion, moral responsibility, and a strong sense of patriotism.

The people's reforms shall be anchored on the national values and principles of good governance as expounded in article 10 of the constitution of Kenya and the University of Nairobi values of care, freedom of thought and expression, innovativeness, commitment, and trust.

Madam Chancellor, the senate recently deliberated and approved a series of people-targeted interventions that are aimed at making the university more relevant, vibrant, and sustainable. These measures include developing common undergraduate courses that align with national and global demands, Implementing a robust work-study program for all students for experiential learning and mentorship, enhancement of students' completion rate, streamlining management of exam records to eradicate cases of complaints of missing marks, eradicate all duplications in course offerings, review course coding to reflect the content source department, enhance our support structures for international students and persons with disabilities, digitalize most of our processes, redesignate staff positions to reflect competencies and the changing nature of job markets among other measures

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to appreciate the important contribution that our Chancellor Dr. Vijoo Rattansi has made to the growth of our university.

Under, your able leadership, Madam Chancellor, we launched the University of Nairobi foundation on 30th June 2022 as a special purpose vehicle for resourcing the University through mobilization of private capital and donations from philanthropy.

With the support of members of our convocation, the Alumni, and partners, the Foundation will provide scholarships to needy students and support innovation and entrepreneurship in the University. This is our dream and as the Chinese say, “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”. We have started.

Once again, let me congratulate all those graduating today for their achievements.

Thank you and God bless you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of fluid, overlapping loops and strokes, characteristic of a cursive or semi-cursive style.

PROF. S.G. KIAMA, PhD
VICE CHANCELLOR