



**UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI**

**SPEECH BY PROF. MARGRET HUTCHINSON, VICE  
CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI DURING  
THE 71<sup>ST</sup> GRADUATION CEREMONY**

**PRESIDED BY  
CHANCELLOR PROF. PATRICK V. VERKOOIJEN**

**DATE: FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2024**

**TIME: 7:00 AM.**

The Chief Guest, Mr. Julius Migos Ogamba, Cabinet Secretary,  
Ministry of Education

The Chancellor, Professor Patrick Verkooijen,

Chairman, University Council, Prof. Amukowa Anangwe,

Members of the University Council,

Members of the University Executive Board and Senate,

Chancellors and Vice Chancellors from other universities present,

Prof. Wilson Akala Principal, Koitaleel Samoei University College,

Mr. Isaac Awuondo, Chairman of the University of Nairobi  
Alumni Association,

Esteemed members of the Judiciary and Parliament,

University Staff,

Parents and Guardians,

Graduands,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure and immense pride that I stand before you today on this momentous occasion, the 71st Graduation Ceremony of the University of Nairobi. **Congratulations to the Class of 2024—you have made it!**

I express my heartfelt gratitude to the parents, guardians, sponsors, staff, and everyone who supported our graduands throughout their academic journey. *Ahsanteni sana!*

I would also like to offer my sincere congratulations to our Chancellor, Prof. Patrick V. Verkooijen, for assuming the office of Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, and to our community for coming together to celebrate this day.

Today is not only a proud moment for our graduating class but also for the University and the diverse community of nations represented within this hallowed ground.

Your journey has been extraordinary, and you stand before us today as representatives of two transformative visions. We once aspired to be “A world-class university committed to scholarly excellence.” In 2023, we embraced a new vision —to be “A globally competitive university transforming society.”

As the Class of 2024, you have witnessed and experienced both of these visions in action. You are the embodiment of that transformation.

Graduating from university is no mean feat. It requires perseverance, resilience, and tenacity. Many stumble along the way, but to the 4,499 of you standing before us today—whether you are receiving one of the 117 PhDs, 552 Master’s degrees, 3 Fellowships, 3,716 Bachelor’s, or Diplomas and Postgraduate Diplomas—congratulations! This is truly a moment of overwhelming joy and achievement.

Over the years, we have elevated the University of Nairobi to international recognition and redefined what it means to be a university in a rapidly changing world. We’ve aligned our curricula to not only impart knowledge but also to equip you with the skills to thrive in an ever-evolving global landscape. We recognized that the world you entered as students would not be the same by the time you graduate — and we have worked tirelessly to prepare you for that evolving reality.

Your journey at this university has been unique, shaped by your aspirations and our shared commitment to academic excellence and personal growth. When you joined us, you came as students with dreams, and we made a promise—to walk with you every step of the way. Together, we have connected you with leaders in your fields, introduced you to the industry’s most pressing challenges, and equipped you to become innovators, leaders, and changemakers in your communities.

Now, as you stand at the threshold of a new chapter, you do so at a critical moment in history. Our nation faces significant social, economic, and political challenges, and the University of Nairobi itself is at a crossroads. But it is precisely in times of uncertainty that transformation becomes possible, and this is where my message of hope begins.

My primary focus will center around three key strategic priorities: securing the long-term sustainability of our university, creating an environment that nurtures and cultivates talent, and expanding our influence in the fields of research and innovation.

As you transition from students to proud alumni, know that you are the change agents the world desperately needs. My message to you is one of hope. You may not yet see the full path before you, but remember the timeless words of Jeremiah 29:11: *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”*

While none of us can predict the future with certainty, I am confident that you are leaving here not only with knowledge but also with a spirit of innovation, resilience, and purpose. You are ready to tackle the world's greatest challenges.

Today is not just a day of celebration — it is the beginning of a new journey. Many of you will return to further your studies, and we look forward to welcoming you back. But as you step out into the world, remember that it needs bold thinkers, compassionate leaders, and resilient builders. You have been trained not just to succeed but to make a meaningful impact.

This is also an exciting moment for the University itself. We have laid before you several transformative initiatives designed to shape both your future and ours, such as the School of Artificial Intelligence, the Innovation Park, and the Nairobi Advanced Health Research Institute. These initiatives will drive societal transformation in Kenya and beyond.

Throughout the week, we've explored these initiatives in depth, culminating in a vibrant Students' Townhall meeting held on Wednesday. These initiatives represent the future of education, innovation, and societal progress, and I invite each of you to engage with them as we continue to transform the University of Nairobi into a beacon of excellence. I also welcome each of you to actively partner with us in these groundbreaking initiatives that the Chancellor will officially launch today.

But we cannot achieve this alone. Much like the Japanese model of kaizen, growth and progress are continuous processes. We

invite you to actively partner with us as we continue to transform the University of Nairobi into a beacon of excellence. Stay connected, offer your feedback, and remember that you remain an integral part of this institution.

In closing, I want to extend a warm welcome to our new Cabinet Secretary for Education, Honourable Mr. Julius Migos Ogamba. It is gratifying to have you back home at the University of Nairobi. We appreciate your commitment to educational reforms, especially those aimed at reducing reliance on government funding. We hope these reforms will be implemented with care to ensure the sustainability and quality of higher education.

We thank you for constituting committees to deal with a wide range of issues affecting students, including the funding model, loans, and the costs of university programs.

To our staff and union representatives, I encourage you to embrace dialogue. Your concerns are essential to our growth. However, let us always work toward the greater good of our community, promoting unity and cooperation.

In closing, I would like to thank our Chancellor, Professor Patrick Verkooijen, for his visionary leadership. Under your guidance, we have laid the groundwork for an innovative and entrepreneurial university. Together, we will make the University of Nairobi a leading institution of higher learning globally, a place that will continue to train future leaders for critical sectors.

Finally, on behalf of the University of Nairobi community and myself, I congratulate the Class of 2024 on this tremendous achievement. You have reached this point through perseverance, hard work, and dedication. But remember, this is not the end — it is just the beginning of a journey filled with boundless potential and opportunities. The world eagerly awaits your contributions.

**Go forth boldly, and make us proud.**

**Thank you, and may God bless you all.**

**PROF. M. JESANG HUTCHINSON**  
**VICE CHANCELLOR (Ag.)**