

VICE CHANCELLOR'S 70TH GRADUATION SPEECH ON 15TH DECEMBER 2023 AT THE CHANCELLOR'S COURT AT 7.30 AM

Cabinet Secretary for Education, Hon. Ezekiel Machogu
Prof. Amukowa Anangwe, Chair of Council
Members of university of Nairobi Council
Chancellor's present
Hon. Members of Parliament,
Amb. Prof. Peter Ngunjiri, Kenya's Ambassador Designate to UNESCO
Excellences Ambassadors and High commissioners,
Vice Chancellors present: (Mt. Kenya University, Daystar University, USUI, Meru University, Chuka University, Zetech University, Technical University of Kenya.
Principal Koitalel Samoei University College,
Council chairs,
CEO (KUCCPS)
Representatives of ABSA,
Partners: Dr. Sam Thenya-of Nairobi Hospital, Mr. Nelson Havi-Retirement Benefits.
Distinguished faculty and staff,
Graduating class of 2023 and the parents,
Ladies and gentlemen.

The Chancellor,

This is our second graduation this year. The last one was in September when we graduated a total of 3983, comprising 3132 undergraduates and 639 post graduate and 211 diplomas. 80 were awarded with phd degrees. In today's graduation we shall be presenting for award of diploma, and conferment of degrees a total of 6000 students giving us a grand total of about 10,000 in 2023/2024 academic year. Out of those graduating today... xxx are undergraduate, xxx are postgraduate, phd comprising xxx of these. This gives us a total of xxx phd graduates this year. This is not a mean achievement, it has taken the commitment of the supervisors, faculty deans and the candidates to do this. I want to thank in a special way all those who worked tirelessly to contribute in whichever way to ensure the success of these these graduates. Universities are distinguished world offer for the niche they occupy in knowledge creation. Collectively, these PhD students and the Masters students have contributed to

the knowledge in their respective disciplines. It is such output that makes university of Nairobi shine in most significant world ranking. These are true coworkers, they contribute in fulfilling our mandate. Recently I implored on faculty deans and chairmen of departments to involve these great minds in teaching and mentoring undergraduate classes. This is the practice world offer. This will give them a platform for honing their skills as they consider an academic career in future. I am also hopeful, that in not too distance future, the ministry of education will review its policies and provide for how the country can benefit from research carried out by postgraduate students. This is a big resource if properly harnessed. Currently most of the research projects are privately financed, through personal resources and disjointed. There is need to institute a funding mechanism that will bring coherence and dove tail research into targeted thematic areas. We need not look far as regards how to get the funds, an act of parliament, The Science Technology and innovation act provides for 2% of GDP to be allocated to National Research fund to support research. The National Government Constituent Development Fund act similarly provides for about 2% of share of National Budget, an allocation that has not failed since the act was assented into law.

To all those graduating today, i congratulate each one of you for the remarkable achievement. I commend your dedication, perseverance, and hard work throughout your academic journey. The life ahead is full of challenges, but the quality of education and the skills you acquired from this University will no doubt enable you to navigate through the rough terrain of life. Be inspired and be confident. As Harvey Fierstein once said, "Accept no one's definition of your life, define yourself". Those who have left before you have moved on and excelled. The Current President, H. E. Dr. William Ruto is a graduate of this University for all his three degrees, Undergraduate, Masters and Phd. Prof. Wangari Muta Maathai the 2004 Nobel Peace Laureate is also a graduate of this University. Earlier this year, one of our former graduand Prof Thumbi Mwangi was awarded the Harvard TH Chan School of Public health 2023, leadership Award in Public Health practice and the 2023 KT Jeang Retrovirology price.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The University has continued to witness a significant influx of students who want to study here as self-sponsored or government sponsored students. Recently, Senate debated on this and decided to immediately respond by increasing

opportunities at University of Nairobi by progressively declaring higher capacities beginning with areas where we do not require immediate infrastructural support. Consequently, for the next new intake we shall declare to Kenya Universities and Colleges Placement service a capacity of 11000 up from 7000 last year. This is an increase of about 57%. I welcome all those who plan to join university to take advantage of this opening. As we expand our opportunities, we are conscious of the limitation we have in accommodation. Discussions are ongoing on how we can expand accommodation spaces. But even as we do so I believe it is time to challenge ourselves, have a candid discussion and explore more effective and profitable means of managing students' accommodation and catering services. There is definitely a better way. We shall be exploring the options available in the coming days. Today, I am happy to note that Acorn Kenya, a private investment company running Quetu and Kijani students accommodation decided to invest and put up an accommodation facility abutting north western side of our Chiromo campus. This facility which has capacity to occupy about 2800 students is due to be opened in January 2024, a great relief to our students. If this trend continues, we may need to expand our teaching and learning resources particularly in health related courses and Engineering. I am glad that the government of Kenya with the support of the French government has committed to expand the engineering teaching and learning facilities, which is already on course. We shall soon put up the Engineering and science complex. I am happy to report that the faculty of engineering is also slated to receive equipment worth about Kshs 500 million to enhance training in Civil and geospatial engineering through support of world bank. For Pharmacy, the government committed a Kshs 100 million in this financial year to complete a portion of the stored pharmacy building project. In addition, working with industry partners the Elgon Kenya we have commenced construction of Kantaria agriculture technology and Innovation transfer centre which aimed at enhancing diffusion of agricultural technologies for enhanced food security. The Manu Chandaria has also promised a sum of Ksh 20 million to provide for Chandaria product development and design centre, under faculty of Built Environment and design. The faculty of arts and social Sciences through a Program lead by Prof. Ontita is also in the process of procuring services for designing and construction of a twin tower facility for housing the centre for land acquisition and resettlement (CELLARS). This initiative is supported by the world Bank. Earlier, this year a state of Art building which was constructed with support of African Development Bank and Government of Kenya and located at Wangari Maathai

Institute campus was officially handed over to the University. This Institute offers an appropriate experiential learning platform on Environmental governance.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The University has remained committed to the value of care, ensuring the uninterrupted education of all students. We are resolute in continuing the ongoing 5-point reforms initiatives, particularly financial and people reforms. These reforms are necessary to effectively optimize our financial and human resources, ensuring the institution's long-term sustainability. Through our change in strategy, we have seen remarkable progress in income generation, specifically from privately sponsored students and research activities. While we continue to diligently address staff welfare with the council, I urge every member of staff to double their efforts in order to maintain and amplify these gains. It is crucial to acknowledge that the increased cost of fuel has eroded some of our financial gains from reforms. The signing and implementation of the new Collective Bargain Agreement in 2019/2020 enhanced staff salaries, but we did not receive commensurate capitation from the government, thereby further straining our finances. It is therefore imperative that we think innovatively to improve our financial situation and ensure the University's survival. As we move forward, we must undergo a drastic shift from traditional approaches and embrace disruptive innovations, as we did during the COVID-19 pandemic when we swiftly adopted technology for teaching and learning. We must realign our resources to support our core business of teaching, learning, research, and community service. The council is fully seized in this matter. To deal with this matter comprehensively the council has embarked on a process of developing appropriate human resource instruments following guidelines that were recently provided by public service commission. The principal of organization design will include among other the span of control, chain of command, unity of command and grouping of related functions with a focus of developing an optimal structure that is lean and efficient.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The University has continued to prioritize research and community service for greater impact. We will continue to align funding to faculties with their research outputs, fostering a vibrant research and entrepreneurial culture on campus. Our objective is to increase the number of researchers and research grants, to foster more innovations, and facilitate the creation of spin-offs from our faculties.

Furthermore, we will actively engage with industries to make the University a hub for product innovations. Strong partnerships with industries are essential for transformation in innovation and technology transfer. In that regard, I would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude to Ms. Elgon Kenya for their support in establishing the Kantaria Agricultural Innovations and Technology Transfer Center in Kabete which I have already mentioned. These initiatives will undoubtedly have transformative impacts on our University and our nation as a whole. We welcome more partners to identify unique areas where they can add value to us and contribute to the future of our University and our beloved country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In our commitment to support the government's digitalization of services, we have made significant strides in digitizing our own services and records. We will continue integrating our platforms and services with government systems and private service providers, ensuring efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery. Already, we have successfully integrated with government systems such as Afya Kenya and others.

In closing, I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has played a role in the success and growth of our great institution. To the Council, staff, alumni, and students, I thank you for your unwavering dedication and love for the University of Nairobi. Your support has been invaluable, and we look forward to your continued involvement in our journey.

To the graduating class of 2023, congratulations once again on your remarkable achievement. Your hard work, perseverance, and resilience have brought you to this momentous day. As you embark on the next chapter of your lives, I encourage you to embrace the values and knowledge instilled in you during your time here at the University of Nairobi. Remember, your education is a privilege and a powerful tool for making positive changes in the world.

And on behalf of the University, I wish each and every member of the University community a joyous and Merry Christmas. May this festive season bring you warmth, happiness, and renewed hope for a brighter future.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

Prof. Stephen Kiama Gitahi, PhD
Vice Chancellor