

SPEECH BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT
HON. DANIEL T. ARAP MOI, E.G.H., M.P.
AT THE 8TH GRADUATION CEREMONY, AND HIS INSTALLATION AS
CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with deep sorrow, and great sense of loss, that we meet here today without the late Father of our Nation, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, who was the first Chancellor of the University of Nairobi. It is truly impossible to find suitable words to express our gratitude for all he did for us and our country. Indeed, I fully recognise that in becoming the Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, I am succeeding someone who in many ways is irreplaceable. However, the late Chancellor left for us a sound foundation. I am therefore, confident that, with your support and dedication, we shall be able to ensure that this University grows from strength to strength.

There are many subjects, on an occasion like this, which I would like to discuss with you. However, because of the time factor, and because I know that there will be other opportunities of meeting with you, today I shall concentrate on only a few points concerning the role of this University in the development of our country.

But before I get into that subject, let me warmly congratulate those who have graduated today. I wish them well in their future careers. I also remind them there is no end to learning: In fact, I strongly advise the new graduates to regard their achievement today as the beginning of their real education.

I would also like to thank the University Council and the Senate most sincerely for including me in the list of 1978 graduates. It is with much humility that I accept the responsibilities and all that appertains to the degree of Doctor of Laws, conferred upon me today. I very much appreciate the honour you have given me.

Now a few remarks about the role of the University of Nairobi in the development of our beloved country. The importance of this University, and our other institutions of higher learning, is impossible to exaggerate when it is realised that the greatest asset we have in developing our country is Our People themselves. We depend on the education system, with University at the top of it, for the enhancement of the quality of our people so that they can carry out the task of developing this country in an effective manner. And here I must emphasise that the development of our country should not be seen only in material terms — important though material well-being is. The Development of our country must include the promotion of political stability, consolidation of our unity, development of selfreliance, and safeguarding our independence in dealing with other nations and the international community in general.

In achieving these broad national objectives, and particularly in developing the ability and enterprise of our people, the University has a central and crucial role to play. As I have already said, the University is at the apex of our education system and we expect it to be an institution dedicated not only to excellence, intellectual challenge and search for truth but also a source of leadership in ensuring that the entire education system is relevant to our needs, now and in the future.

I suspect that to a number of Kenyans, the University is particularly known for occasional confrontations between the students and the police. Happily, such confrontations seem to have come to an end. I would like to take this opportunity to say that the University of Nairobi should be known for the significant contribution it makes in the development of our country. Indeed, I congratulate the University Council, the Senate, the University administration and the teaching staff on their achievements. However, there is still much to be done: and past achievements should be regarded as the foundation for even more energetic efforts in the years to come.

In order to enable the University to undertake its important responsibilities effectively, its various needs must be met. To begin with, the University must have dedicated and qualified lecturers who make it their duty to thoroughly understand the needs of our nation. A second requirement is adequate physical academic facilities. In this connection, I understand that there is urgent need to build a new library and a new Biological Science Building. I have directed my Vice-President and Minister for Finance to allocate £2 million to the University for the two projects. Further I would like to suggest to the University Council that the new Library be known as the Jomo Kenyatta University Library in memory of our late Father of the Nation, Mzee Jomo Kenyatta and his love for education.

No university can, of course, exist without students. I would, therefore, like to say something about the students. In a developing country like ours in which university students are, in terms of academic and general education, far ahead of their parents and their less fortunate brothers and sisters, there is a danger that students might feel that they know a lot and that their ideas should always be accepted. While we expect the students to be vigorous in their thinking and to apply their minds to the full in discussing the various problems facing our country, it would be a tragic mistake on their part to assume that they were the only ones who knew the causes of those problems and their appropriate solutions. I urge our students to give much more thought to the philosophical approach to the political, social and economic strategies which have been guiding this country since independence. Our philosophy and those strategies have contributed significantly to whatever we have achieved today. Needless to say, we must continuously examine their effectiveness. In fact the dynamic forces facing us demand that we do so in order to ensure that progress of change is properly planned and managed, and that we make use of all the opportunities which come our way.

Another point I would like to make is that there is a danger that students might go through the formal education system without first-hand practical knowledge of the actual economic, social and political situation prevailing in the country, particularly in the rural areas. I am convinced that the education received in the lecture halls should be supplemented by practical education in the field. For this reason, I have directed that the Government and the University work out a scheme which would enable the students to do some practical work of national significance before they graduate. Through such a scheme I can see, for example, the students gaining valuable experience and doing a great national service by working in our hospitals, agricultural training centres, secondary schools and in the campaign to eliminate illiteracy. Students are our future leaders, and their education is to prepare them for

that role: It is, therefore, absolutely necessary that their knowledge of the country, and the problems facing it, should be as complete as possible.

One other subject I would like to touch on briefly today is the role of the Harambee spirit in our education programmes. Harambee effort has already contributed significantly in this field. We must continue to promote that spirit. Further, I think it is now time for the government to work out a more comprehensive programme for doing so. One area in which the government will take immediate action is the development of the established Harambee Institutes of Technology. Our people have made truly magnificent efforts in putting up buildings and other facilities for these Institutes. My Government will assist in meeting some of the recurrent costs of these Institutes, besides ensuring that the courses taught are appropriate and the standards are high. As is well known, technological developments are essential in the process of economic and social growth. Here in Kenya, the next stage of our country's development requires that we accelerate technological innovations, and new ways of doing things, in all our sectors. It is primarily for this reason that we must now give technical education high priority in our education programmes.

Before I end this address, I would like all Kenyans to know that I am aware of the various suggestions put forward for establishment of more universities in Kenya. For many reasons, including the fact that we must plan the supply of our high level manpower extremely carefully so that it is consistent with our requirements, this is an issue which needs very detailed examination. The Government will not therefore rush into establishment of more universities. However, this is an item which is high of the agenda of the urgent matters for discussion in the Government.

Finally, I would like to end this address by stressing again that the University of Nairobi, and our other Institutions of Higher Learning, have an important part to play in developing the KENYA WE WANT. The Kenya We Want is a country which is developing, in a viable and sustainable manner, for the benefit of all its citizens: A country which is democratic and united and in which basic freedoms and human dignity are guaranteed: A country in which our valuable traditions are respected and promoted: And a country which actively participates in African and International affairs. This is the image that leads me to continuously urge the people of Kenya to uphold the principles of unity, love for our country and one another, and peace. I am sure I can count on the University of Nairobi to work hand in hand with my Government in promoting these principles. Indeed, I want the University of Nairobi and the Government Ministries to establish the closest working relations in our struggle to develop Kenya for the benefit of all Kenyans.

Thank You.

Office of the President, Nairobi