

**ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR JOSEPH MAINA MUNGAI, VICE-CHANCELLOR
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI.**



Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Kenya and Chancellor of the University of Nairobi, Your Excellency the Vice-President, Your Excellency Mama Ngina Kenyatta, Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!

We are gathered here today to witness the public passing out of some 1761 graduates of this University as they go to commence their new operational life in society. We are extremely grateful to Your Excellency Sir for having graciously consented to come and preside over this 9th Graduation Ceremony of the University. We highly value and appreciate your presence here with us which is testimony of your deep love for educational activities.

We feel very proud and grateful to you Sir that the Graduation Ceremony has come at the climax of a series of very important national events. On behalf of the entire University community I therefore take this opportunity, first of all, to congratulate you most heartily for having been elected unopposed as Member of Parliament for Baringo Central and as President of the Republic of Kenya. May I, therefore, also warmly congratulate and welcome you, Sir, as the unopposed Chancellor and therefore head of this institution. We in the University join the rest of Kenyans in looking forward to your continued guidance and dynamic leadership under which most of us have now learnt how to run and work diligently.

I wish on behalf of the entire University community to assure Your Excellency of our total loyalty to you, the Government and the ruling party KANU, and our total commitment to our duty of the development, storage and transmission of knowledge for national and international development.

At this point Sir, I would also like to express my most humble and sincere gratitude for the trust you have shown in appointing me Vice-Chancellor of this University. I shall do my utmost to ensure that the enormous expertise of the University continues to grow and to be directed towards finding solutions to national and international problems that face our society.

On behalf of the University I would also like to congratulate you and the Kenyan public for having conducted the recent Parliamentary and Civic elections so smoothly and successfully. We also congratulate you on the formation of a reorganised Government. In particular, we warmly welcome the creation of a Ministry of Higher Education and the transfer of the National Council for Science and Technology to the Office of the President. We believe these two steps will ensure that the processes of development, storage and transmission of knowledge at University level will get the highest level of attention in its planning, programming, budgeting and application to development problems of the country.

In this regard Sir, the University has initiated steps to translate the national development goals expressed in the 1979–1983 national development plan into research priorities. Indeed the University has been fully briefed about its role in alleviation of poverty in the country. In particular, the University will do its best to make its expertise available to enable all the people of Kenya to have access to modern functional knowledge which they require to understand the changes and chances of the world of today. In this regard Sir, the University is currently reviewing its role in the entire process of continuing education in relation to the current campaign to eradicate illiteracy in the country. Furthermore, the University community has been reminded of its role in assisting in the stimulation of cultural and intellectual life of Kenya.

As required by your Sir at last year's graduation, the University has continued to develop the human resources required for development of the country. This is illustrated today by those graduating today who number 1621 for first degrees and diplomas, 129 for masters and post-graduate diplomas and 11 for PhDs. We are confident Sir that if this grand total of 1761 University educated graduates is appropriately distributed in the economy, they will contribute to the enhancement of the quality of life of our people.

At last year's graduation, Sir, you emphasised the role of the University in consolidating our unity. The University is definitely one of the places where the processes of social integration can and will be studied and hopefully demonstrated. In this regard, we have initiated processes of getting our own scholars of different specialisations to tackle specified problems together as a team. In this way we are beginning to realise Sir that the expertise to be found in this University is enormous. We hope that the Government will continue to show confidence in utilising this expertise before going to look for similar expertise from other countries.

Your Excellency, the University was also reminded last year by you Sir that it must maintain its leadership in the entire education system of the country to ensure that it is relevant to our needs, now and in the future. The University noted then with gratitude your concern about the need to assist the Harambee Institutes of Science and Technology. These institutes contribute by producing the technicians and craftsmen required to provide the necessary supportive skills in relation to the graduates of the University. In this regard Sir, the University is currently initiating discussions and studies aimed at assisting towards greater rationalisation of manpower planning and development in the country. It is evident now that the past orientation of our educational system towards white-collar jobs has resulted in very serious shortages in many of the skills necessary to enable Kenyans to become self-reliant. This can only be achieved through carefully worked out plans and programmes aimed at correcting the existing imbalances of our skill patterns in order to improve our operational efficiency at individual, institutional and national levels.

On the question of physical academic facilities, I am glad to report to you Sir that your directive last year regarding the construction of a biological sciences building and the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library has been followed up. The biological sciences building has progressed well, as well as the Halls of Residence for the expansion of the Faculty of Agriculture at Kabete, and these will be in use during the next academic year. With regard to the Library, sketch drawings have been approved and working drawings are in an advanced stage. However, due to the cost involved, the construction of the Library may have to be done in phases so as to achieve a building of the required capacity and quality.

Your Excellency Sir you also directed the University and the Ministry of Education to work out the University Students Service Scheme. This has been fully discussed within the University and the proposals have been forwarded to the Government. It remains to be costed and implemented. In the meantime, I am glad to report that apart from a few departments, most of the students do in fact spend an extra term in the rural areas where they become familiar with some of the development problems. For example, the fourth year medical students spend a whole term in Machakos district, with visits to Nyanza, Western and Coast Provinces doing community health at the grassroots. The students of law spend a fourth term in district magistrates' courts. The necessary foundations do therefore exist for a fullscale University Students Service Scheme if and when the funds have been found.

Your Excellency, I have tried to indicate briefly the way the objectives and operations of the University are being oriented towards greater efficiency and relevance in serving our society. This process will be continually refined in close consultation with the Government. But in order for any achievements to be made Sir, two requirements need to be met. Firstly, University education needs to be planned, programmed and budgetted for on a long-term basis. In this regard, Sir, we are therefore greatly encouraged by the creation of a Ministry of Higher Education.

Secondly there is need to increase resources for the primary function of the University, namely the development of knowledge through research, the storage of that knowledge in adequate libraries and massive transmission of that knowledge to society to enhance the quality of their understanding of modern life. Research has in the past been regarded as a luxury which only the developed countries could afford. It is now realised Sir that research which is nationally co-ordinated and whose knowledge is appropriately used is the only way of facilitating the definition and alleviation of social and economic problems. Together with research goes the process of development of specialised manpower through postgraduate training.

The Government has recently accorded great prominence to science and technology for development. This is evidenced by the creation of the National Council for Science and Technology two years ago. The Council is expected by law to promote and co-ordinate research work and the appropriate application of the research knowledge in solving the country's development problems. The University of Nairobi and its constituent Kenyatta University College constitute the largest research and postgraduate training institution in the country. It is therefore my duty Your Excellency, as Vice-Chancellor of this University and as Chairman of the Nairobi Council for Science and Technology, to highlight to the Government in particular and the taxpaying public in general, the importance of promoting nationally co-ordinated research and postgraduate training for the future of this country.

Your Excellency, in making this kind of appeal for more resources for University work, I would like to assure you Sir that the University community is fully aware of the difficult times the country is going through economically. We have heeded Your Excellency's Jamhuri Day message to the nation the day before yesterday that "we are going to find it extremely difficult to maintain the impressive development momentum which we have been able to achieve in recent years". In this regard Sir, the University has not only carried out drastic cuts to its budget for the current financial year but it is also setting up a long-term programme for reducing its own internal costs by building its own houses, making its own uniforms, growing most of its own food, repair-

ing and maintaining its own vehicles and equipment and by establishing its own press. I would indeed like to assure Your Excellency of the University's understanding and concern about the country's problems such as those of poverty, illiteracy, disease, school dropouts, dry marginal areas and general underdevelopment. I am confident however that through nationally co-ordinated and adequately funded research and manpower development programmes we can tackle these problems with greater relevance and increased efficiency.

I am also confident that the 1761 graduands that I shall shortly be presenting to you Sir will significantly add to the vital link in this process of social and economic development in the various jobs they will be performing. I commend them to you Sir and to the Nyayo philosophy of peace, love and unity under which they will get their guidance in serving the Kenyan nation of which Your Excellency is President.

