



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**ADDRESS BY PROF. PETER M. F. MBITHI, VICE
CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI,
DURING THE 59TH GRADUATION CEREMONY
HELD ON FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2018 AT THE
CHANCELLOR'S COURT AT 8:00 A.M.**

Madam Chancellor Dr. Vijoo Rattansi
Cabinet Secretary for Education, Amb. (Dr.) Amina
Mohammed
Principal Secretary State Department for University
Education, Prof. Collette Suda
Chair of the Council of the University of Nairobi, Dr. Julia
Ojiambo
Council Members present
Chancellors and Vice Chancellors of other Universities
Your excellencies High Commissioners and Ambassadors
Executive Secretary for Inter-Governmental Authority
for Development (IGAD), Amb. Mohaboub Maalim
Members of University Senate
Staff
Parents and guardians
Invited guests
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning!

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to the University of Nairobi. I also wish to take this advance opportunity to more particularly recognize and extend a very warm welcome to our newly appointed council members. *Karibuni sana* and please feel at home.

In this graduation Madam Chancellor, we will be conferring only the 5th University of Nairobi Doctor of Science degree. Prof. Julius Alexander Ogeng'o, congratulation in advance. This is no mean feat for any scholar! We are honoured to have you in our midst. This distinguished achievement is even more inspiring given the position that you hold in this University as our Ag. Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Academic Affairs.

Also joining our able Professor on the roll of graduates will be 75 PhDs, 403 masters, 2,845 bachelors, 571 diplomas and 14 postgraduate diploma graduants. Also represented are diverse nationalities representing the face of the continent. Significantly, we have 20 graduants from Somaliland under the sponsorship of IGAD. We want to believe there is a reason we were chosen as IGAD's university of choice for the capacity building intervention in Somaliland. To all of you our graduants, congratulations! I tip my hat to you and invite you to join us at the University of Nairobi Alumni Association!

Madam Chancellor, at exactly 1330 hrs on May 11th 2018 at the Japan Space Agency (JAXA) Tsukuba Space Centre in Tokyo, Kenya's first university satellite was deployed to orbit. With this deployment, University of Nairobi broke into the elite rank of universities to have ventured into space science. We intend to stay the course in shattering barriers of space and time and in the words of Gillespie Magee, Jr, to slip the surly bonds of earth and to touch the face of God. I would wish to register my very profound appreciation for the technical team led by Prof. Mbuthia and the support from our parent Ministry represented by our Cabinet Secretary Amb. Amina Mohammed for their tireless efforts in making this possible.

Recently, we had the very successful launch of both the Office of Career Services and the 2-day Chancellor's Career Fair. We appreciate the effort made by both the Ministry and our Chancellor in thinking about the transition of our students and graduates from learning to earning and to provide support structures within the University to realize the same. We are grateful for all the corporate firms, entrepreneurs and state corporations

that honoured us with your presence and participation. That is a demonstration of faith in the direction we are heading in and the shared nexus between our destinies. As I mentioned during the CEO's roundtable and to paraphrase the words of John Donne, no university is an island entire of itself; every university is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. That is to say, industry and universities should co-exist in a mutually beneficial space where we supply solutions and a well-educated labour force and the industry rewards them. We are taking deliberate steps to open our doors to industry. We are keen to add value to industry processes and help you develop innovative and resource efficient solutions that will deliver competitive advantages, grow bottom lines and lend themselves to sustainability. Talk to us...we are ready and willing to listen.

As a University, we have many challenges facing us. Mobilization of financial resources in the face of dwindling state capitation and falling Module II enrolments remains a significant challenge. We are working together in concert to set rolling several initiatives that will in the long run insulate the university against full reliance on the exchequer for capitation. With this faith, we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for each other, knowing that we will be sustainable one day. It will be a long and windy trudge, but if we are brave enough to bid goodbye to our old ways of doing things, Paulo Coelho thinks that life will reward us with a new hello!

As a university, we want to renew and rededicate ourselves to the pursuit of excellence. Our priorities for the future will be centred around enriching the learning and research experience for students, growing our research portfolio and commercialization of research outputs, expanding the internationalization agenda of every facet of the University, broadening partnership opportunities with both industry and the government including, if given some latitude, deeper participation through our expansive technical expertise in the design and implementation of Big 4 projects. Finally, we are committed to embedding and cascading the culture of excellence through every corner of our University and in everything we do. We are ready to tinker with the right processes to secure a successful future for the University and to sustain the competitive edge of our graduates in the marketplace.

To our graduates, we value you. We send you into a turbid world. As we do so, we harbour the unwavering hope that you will soar on wings like eagles; that you will run and not grow weary, that you will walk and not be faint. Our consistent march to the top as confirmed by the webometric rankings; from number 29 in 2009, number 9 in 2014 Africa and now at number 5, indicates that we are riding the right winds and the summit of Africa is now within reach. This also confirms that the outcome quality of our graduates is on the ascend year upon year. Graduates, you are not only educated in material aspects of life but also empowered with knowledge and relevant skills to serve the needs of society. I look forward to reading your good reports; reports of success and the marks you have made in the world; reports of pioneering

ventures and pushing new frontiers. I wish you the very best in all your endeavours as you become our living ambassadors in the world

Finally, I want to thank our partners; the government for the capitation and other support, our development partners and alumni for scholarships and support to our students, our parents and guardians for unwavering support and keeping our students accountable both at the University and at home, our staff members for burning the midnight oil equipping our students for the future and last but not least, our employers for finding meaning and use for skills imparted into our students. We cannot thank you enough! We pray that you will continue holding our hands as we walk into the future with promise.

Thank you all and God bless you!

PROF. PETER M. F. MBITHI
VICE-CHANCELLOR