



Mount Kenya

University

REMARKS

BY

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CHAIRMAN BOARD OF TRUSTEES

AT

MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY 8TH GRADUATION CEREMONY

ON

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AT

MKU HAPPY VALLEY GROUNDS, THIKA

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Ladies and gentlemen

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you today. It is always an honour to talk to graduands on one of the most important days of their lives. Today, we celebrate the academic achievements for which you have laboured for and rightly earned.

Eight years ago, we received a Letter of Interim Authority from the Commission of University Education – now the Commission for University Education- allowing us to establish Mount Kenya University. I can state without any contradiction whatsoever that few things fill my heart with more joy than witnessing the parade of such fine minds. Congratulations to you all, and thank you for believing in us.

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Preparation of Graduands

I want to start by congratulating the University Council, the Vice-Chancellor Prof. Stanley Waudu and the entire Senate and management of the university for your professionalism in steering this institution to greater heights. Preparing a student all the way from his fresher's day to graduation is no mean task. I wish to personally commend Prof. Waudu

for his good stewardship, which has ensured that Mount Kenya University is not a homogenous institution especially in recruitment of staff. While tribalism continues to bedevil some universities in Kenya, Mount Kenya University's policy is guided by professionalism and commitment to service. There is no doubt that Mount Kenya University is first among equals.

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Hall of Fame

Two months ago, I was in Monaco, a small but incredibly rich country in the South of France, where I was inducted into the Global Entrepreneurs Hall of Fame. We were only 65 entrepreneurs from around the globe. Some of them operate billion dollar companies that are more than 100 times bigger than Mount Kenya University; I have never seen so many private jets parked together before. The jets were owned by my fellow Hall of Fame inductees. But since I don't have a private jet, I told myself that my best private jet is the knowledge that our graduates have acquired from this great institution.

I was truly humbled to be recognised for the impact we are making in the area of education, which has enabled us transform the lives of thousands of people. This would not have been possible without the support of our staff, students, parents, guardians and sponsors. The award was like a cake, which is made up of many ingredients. A cake cannot be complete without the key ingredients. From the bottom of my heart, I wish to thank you all! I also wish to dedicate this award to you!

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Preparation of graduands

Dear graduands..... Today you have opened a new chapter in your lives, a chapter where you will be described not as a student, but as a professional and an MKU alumnus. These new titles come with a new freedom, and a new responsibility. Do not take it for granted. The direction your life takes from today henceforth will be dictated largely by the decisions you make. Whether you will succeed or fail; whether you will become rich or poor; and whether you will marry or remain single will purely be upon you.

I will tell you a story of the village fortune-teller and the boy who sought to challenge him.

In a far away land, there lived a fortune-teller called Katu. He was feared by everybody in his village including the King. He had correctly predicted the coming of the rains after a long, dry spell. He had also correctly predicted that the King's favourite daughter would become pregnant. Whenever he sounded his horn to warn the other villagers of impending doom, everybody stood to listen.

One day, a boy from the neighbouring village decided to challenge the fortune-teller's authority. He came up with a ploy that he was convinced would expose Katu as a liar. Word of the challenge spread across the two villages like bush fire. It was believed that whoever challenged the fortune-teller would die!

But Katu, being a wise, old man accepted the challenge. On the day of testing him, people from the two villages congregated in a field. There was a lot of drumming, singing and shouting. But the atmosphere was tense! The neighbours from the boy's village challenged him to teach the fortune-teller a lesson.

The two climbed on a podium. Katu, the fortune-teller, was smoking his pipe and blowing out smoke slowly from his mouth. Meanwhile the boy stood with his hands behind his back. He did not allow Katu to have a glance at what he was holding. The crowd cheered, as they jostled for a better view of the two adversaries.

"I'm holding a bird in my hands," the boy said to Katu, looking at him straight in the eyes. "If you are a genuine fortune-teller, I want you to state whether the bird is alive or dead!"

The crowd shouted while others cheered! There was a loud whistle accompanied by the words "Katu is a liar!" The fortune-teller did not even blink. He took another puff at his tobacco pipe and let out the smoke in slow motion. The crowd became more agitated, waiting for his response. "Speak out now! Answer the question!" they shouted.

Katu took a quick glance at the crowd. Then he cleared his throat to speak.

Almost immediately, the crowd fell silent. The oracle was about to open up.

"Young man," he said to the boy, his voice rich with hope and anticipation. "I will not answer your question as to whether the bird is alive or dead. Because if I tell you that it is dead, you will just squeeze it in your hands and kill it. And if I tell you it is alive, you will just open your hands and show it to me alive.

Whether the bird is alive or dead, the decision is squarely in your hands."

Ladies and gentlemen.....this story teaches us that the power to make decisions is purely in your hands. Graduation gives you the power to make the right decisions; decisions that are guided by knowledge and wisdom.

In life you must believe in something to make it happen. Self-belief is always the first step. As the novelist Terry Pratchett once said, “The truth may be out there, but the lies are inside your head.” If you convince yourself that you cannot achieve something, then of course, you won't achieve anything.

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Pursue your dreams and never give up

A few years ago, I presided over a function at my former school back in the village. One of the former students took to the microphone and narrated how he had been raised by a single mother and struggled to educate himself through secondary school by doing odd jobs such as welding. It took him nine years to complete secondary school, where he scored a B- grade in KCSE. But he wished to continue with his education. Unfortunately, he could not raise the fees to join college, and so he went back to welding at a motor vehicle garage. “Some of my colleagues ridiculed me that I had wasted valuable time by going to school,” he narrated. “I would rather have stayed on as a welder from early on.” I was touched by his tenacity. I reached out to him and as a university, we supported him by way of scholarship. I am happy to report that he is one

of the graduands today, having earned his Degree in Procurement.

Similarly, I would like to congratulate the Honorable Members of Parliament from Kigali Campus who are graduating today. I also extend my warm congratulations to Honorable Celestin Rwigema, the former Prime Minister of Rwanda who is also graduating with a Ph.D. Your resolve and determination to pursue higher education is simply admirable.

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Utilization of idle resources to support higher education

There are many young people in our communities who desire to advance their education but do not have enough money to do so. And the interesting thing is that there is a lot of money and property in this country in the form of unclaimed assets. These unclaimed assets amount into billions of shillings. I would like to request the government to put this money into a fund that will be accessible to the youth. The youth can borrow this money to support their education, or utilise it as loans for starting their own businesses. The money can also be used to expand the

Higher Education Loans Board, whose resources have been constrained by the high number of young people seeking loans to pay for their higher education.

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Commitment to supporting quality higher education

As the sponsors of this great institution, we will continue striving to fulfil our commitment to our students throughout the Eastern Africa region.

We will increase our efforts in improving the academic and physical facilities. Soon after this graduation, we will commission our new building at Lodwar Campus, which is Kenya's first post-independence university campus in that area. We are also constructing new buildings in Kigali, Rwanda, Nakuru and at Main Campus. We will invest heavily on Information and Communications Technology, which will improve our online learning services. We will also increase our budget for research to at least 10% of our gross income. We will also increase our equipment for research and funding to our researchers. As sponsors of this university, we are truly committed to *'Building a Research Culture,'* which will improve innovation and lead to the discovery of new knowledge and ideas.

All these efforts are also geared towards giving our students the best atmosphere for learning. If you fail, we do not want excuses from you. I'm looking forward to teaming up with the parents and guardians to ensure that every student who enrolls at Mount Kenya University becomes a success in life; Education is a partnership.

On this note, I wish to thank all the students who are making a positive contribution to the image of Mount Kenya University either through sports, drama, community outreach and other extra-curricular activities. You are true beacons of this university.

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Exploit your potential

To all graduands, always keep in mind the religious teaching that you cannot light a lamp and put it under the bed, or hide it inside a jar. With your graduation, the flame of knowledge and ideas has been lit inside you. Use this light to fight the darkness of poverty, irresponsibility and failure. You are the salt of the earth. Do not lose your saltiness. And if you think you are too small to make an impact in this world, think about

a mosquito: it is a very tiny insect yet it kills more people than any other animal in the world. Imagine the many sleepless nights and amount of resources allocated to fight the mosquito!

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As I conclude, I will leave you with these words of ancient Chinese wisdom, which say:

When things are investigated, then true knowledge is achieved

When true knowledge is achieved, then the will becomes sincere

When the will is sincere, then the heart is set right

When the heart is set right, then personal life is cultivated

When the personal life is cultivated, then the family life is regulated

When the family life is regulated, then the national life is orderly

And when the national life is orderly, then there is peace in the world.

I wish you journey mercies as you go back to your respective destinations. Thank you once again for choosing Mount Kenya University as your preferred institution of higher learning.

May God Bless you and grant you continuous success!