

Mount Kenya



University

REMARKS

BY

Prof. Simon N. Gicharu, CBS

Chairman, Board of Directors – MKU

**DURING 14TH GRADUATION CEREMONY OF
MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY**

ON

03RD AUGUST, 2018

1.0 Salutation

- The Chancellor, Prof. John J. Struthers
- The Guest Speaker, the Vice - Chancellor of the Makerere University, Uganda - Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe,
- Madam Jane Nyutu, Co-Founder of Mount Kenya University,
- Members of the MKU Board of Directors,
- Chairman of the University Council, Prof. David Serem,
- Members of the University Council,
- The Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Stanley Waudu,

- Members of the University Senate,
- Members of MKU Staff,
- Parents and Guardians,
- Distinguished Guests,
- Graduands and students,
- Ladies and gentlemen,

2.0 Preliminaries

I am happy to join the Vice - Chancellor in welcoming you all to this great occasion of the 14th graduation ceremony of Mount Kenya University.

But before I give my remarks, I am happy to introduce the following persons to you:

- 1) Madam Jane Nyutu: The MKU Co-Founder
- 2) Dr. Jaydeep H. Palep
- 3) Dr. Reshma J. Palep

3.0 Congratulating the graduands, parents / guardians and other stakeholders

I also take this opportunity to congratulate the graduating students for their hard work and determination. We are all gathered here today to celebrate your success. Every time I think of success, I remember the words of **an American actress, Aisha Tayler**, who stated so correctly that, **“Success is not the absence of failure, but the persistence through failure”**. You persisted in your studies and that is why we celebrate you.

I urge you to retain that determination as you join the labor market since the University has equipped you with the requisite skills and attitudes to make it. I also want to thank your parents and guardians for their sacrifices that have made it possible for you to complete your studies. Also all the stakeholders who have contributed towards your successful completion of your studies including the staff members at MKU.

4: Graduating Competitive Products at MKU

Ladies and Gentlemen, as a University, we continue to ensure that we are alive to the dynamics of the labour market in order to make our graduates as competitive as possible. We are all alive to the reality of the establishment of over 70 Universities in this country. While I applaud the government's effort in opening access to higher education opportunities in Kenya, my team and I are kept awake at night by the dilemma of how to make the Mount Kenya University graduate competitive.

We have done all within our capacity and I am happy to confirm that we have achieved this. It is for this reason that the University continues to expand and improving the learning infrastructure.

4.1: Centre for Professional Development Commissioned at MKU

In line with the aforementioned, recently, we commissioned a multi-million shillings Centre for Professional Development here at the main campus in Thika.

The Centre will coordinate professional training which will enable our students and other Kenyans to acquire additional skills that will make them competitive in the job market. Professional courses will be offered through the regular and virtual learning platforms with the Centre serving as an examination centre. I am aware that the Centre has been accredited and recognized by local and international professional certification bodies. This Centre offers an opportunity to our graduands and students to make them better. And I am happy to say that this is not all.

4.2: The i-hub at MKU: Our Local “Silicon Valley”

Within the Centre for Professional Development, that is located at the 12th Floor of the Alumni Plaza, here at the Thika Campus, there is an innovation hub (*i-Hub*). This is a space that is equipped to support development and testing of technological discoveries in the Country. I am delighted to say that we are creating our own *Silicon Valley* within the University. Our students now have a chance to use the latest technology to conceptualize and realize their innovations.

As the Board of Directors, we are committed to make sure that the i-Hub works. We have already mobilized some resources to bring on board experienced partners and staff to drive this vision forward. This is something we will continue doing until the University is also recognized not only by the quality of its graduates but also by the relevance of the innovations coming out of the i-Hub.

5: Stable Financial Status of MKU

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am sure many of you in the audience read about some Universities that have been unable to remit statutory deductions to the government and other agencies. You have also been reading in the local dailies about a number of higher learning institutions that are “cash crunched”. Sadly, it is unfortunate that some institutions have not been remitting staff Sacco and pension deductions.

I am happy that the theme of this graduation is on, **“Financing of Higher Education in Africa for sustainability and quality”**. We are also fortunate that the Chief Guest who will be speaking soon after this comes from a University that has a history of 94 years. I am sure he will give us some secrets of institutional longevity. I suspect some of you have been wondering quietly if MKU is also facing financial problems.

I am happy to assure our students and partners that Mount Kenya University is not one of those institutions facing financial challenges. I take this opportunity to thank the Vice-Chancellor and his team for their diligence and commitment in ensuring that the University financial systems are working efficiently.

5.1: Ksh 30 million for renewable energy and petroleum engineering

In addition to the above, the School of Engineering, Energy & Built Environment early this year received equipment worth 30 million to train students in the area of renewable energy and petroleum engineering.

5.2: Ultra-modern 18,000 seater auditorium

This is not all! I am sure some of our graduands seated here are sad that they have to leave MKU before completion of the ultra-modern 18,000 seater auditorium. 15

This facility that will be completed later this year will create more space for student forums, academic seminars, conferences, public lectures, and workshops. Development of these facilities is geared towards improving the learning infrastructure for our students.

6: Competitive Staff welfare for staff retention and attraction

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are aware our members of staff are important partners in achieving our mandates. In fact, they are an integral cog in the wheel of success.

We are therefore continually working towards improving their welfare. In January this year for example, we were able to implement the staff provident fund that has improved the welfare of our members of staff. In addition, we are in the process of setting up a staff fitness centre. This fitness centre will contribute towards improving the general well-being of the members of staff and their productivity. In this way, the staff retention and attraction remains at an on high level.

7: MKU Foundation for resources mobilization

Our Chief Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would not want to end my speech without mentioning an important Directorate that we have established at Mount Kenya University. Every so often, I encounter brilliant students with so much potential but who cannot afford to be in at the university.

While we have supported a good number of such students, it dawned on me that we needed to have an office that is dedicated to mobilization of resources in support of needy students as well as community outreach activities. This was the birth of Mount Kenya University Foundation. The Foundation that is under my office will be setting up Ksh 100 million endowment fund initiative later in the year. I encourage our newest alumni as well as our partners to support this initiative to ensure sustainability.

8: Conclusion

In conclusion, we have made significant strides this year in development of training infrastructure. We also have other projects that are at various stages of completion. As the Board of Directors, we are committed to ensure that our students get the best education and also enjoy their learning environment.

Once more to you the graduands, I leave you with a word of wisdom quoted from Oprah Winfrey during her commencement speech at Harvard University in 2013 saying;

“ No matter what challenges and setbacks you may encounter along the way, you will find true success and happiness by having one goal...to fulfil the highest most truthful expression of yourself as a human being”.

Go out there and be the best you can. This will be your biggest achievement in life.

God Bless You ALL and thank you.

**Prof. Simon Gicharu, Chairman Board of Directors,
MKU**