

**Mount Kenya**



**University**

SPEECH

BY

*Dr. Simon N. Gicharu, CBS*

CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF TRUSTEES

AT

MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY 9<sup>TH</sup>  
GRADUATION CEREMONY

ON

FRIDAY, 11<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER, 2015

AT

MKU HAPPY VALLEY GROUNDS, THIKA

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## **Salutation**

- The Chief Guest, Hon. Eugene Wamalwa, Cabinet Secretary for Water and Irrigation,
- Chancellor, Prof. Victoria Wulsin,
- The Guest Speaker, Prof. David Anthony Maughan Brown, Emeritus Professor, York St. John University, England,
- Members of the University Board of Trustees,
- Prof. Grace N. Njoroge, Chairman and Members of the University Council,
- Dr. Mohamed Farah Duale, State Minister, Ministry of Finance, Somaliland,
- Mr. Abdillahi Ibrahim Habane, State Minister, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, Somaliland,

- Mr. Suleiman Jama, Director General, Ministry of Health, Representative of Somaliland,
- Prof. Hussain Hassan Gulaid, Executive Director, National Commission for Higher Education,
- Mr. Abdullahi Ali Jama, Ministry of Education, Puntland,
- Your Excellences, Ambassadors and High Commissioners present,
- Honorable National and County Government leaders present,
- Prof. Stanley W. Waudu, Vice-Chancellor,
- Members of Management Board and Senate,
- Members of the Staff,
- Graduands and Students,
- Distinguished Guests, Ladies and gentlemen.

## Introduction

Thank you for giving me this opportunity to address you today. This is a defining moment for us as a university. It is a time for us to look before we leap, to think and reflect as we enter a bold, new era. Today, we are celebrating 60,000 graduates since we started as a small commercial college more than 10 years ago. Those are 60,000 lives that have been transformed for the better. 60,000 reasons for us to continue doing what we do!

I must confess that few things in this world fill my heart with more joy than when I meet a past student who tells me how our education helped him changed his life.

Today, you will hear the story of one such alumnus, to whom we are going to give a special award.

## **2) ICT and Infrastructure Development**

### **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

You have heard of the saying that its easier to get at the top than to remain there. Many people especially from other institutions often ask me, *“Bwana Gicharu, what do you do as Mount Kenya University to remain at the top?”*

Well, that is a good question. And I answer that we have taken the principles of individual success and institutionalized them: Integrity, accountability, hardwork, commitment, and sustained focus. We are always looking for new ways to improve what we do, especially service delivery to our students.

Today, I am announcing that we have started overhauling our entire ICT infrastructure across all campuses. This will ensure seamless and rapid service to our students. I know that some of our students have had problems here and there about delay in their graduation. Sooner rather than later, we as the administration are the ones who will be asking students why they aren't graduating; it won't be the students asking us. I am happy to announce that these efforts to improve this ICT infrastructure have indeed started bearing fruit. Two days ago, we were awarded as the best institution in Kenya in the use of ICT, during the ICT Association of Kenya Awards.

I am also happy to announce that next year, we will commission the new, ultra modern campus buildings in Thika, Nakuru and Rwanda. We have invested over Ksh5 billion. This shows our commitment to continuous improvement of academic facilities.

### **3) Rwanda and the overhaul of the 8-4-4 system**

Talking about Rwanda, let me take this moment to thank our students, parents and guardians who stood by us when we were facing regulatory challenges in Rwanda earlier in the year.

But what really happened? We were using the 8-4-4 system of education, while in Rwanda, the education system is different.

For instance, it takes four years in Kenya to graduate with a Bachelors degree in Medical Laboratory. But in Rwanda, the programme should take three years, in line with the education system. I am happy to report that we dialogued with the education regulator in Rwanda and reached a harmonious conclusion. All the programmes we are offering at Rwanda are now fully accredited.

On this note, I welcome the proposals for review of the 8-4-4 education system by the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development. Under the A-Level system, students were more prepared to face the world once they leave school since at an advanced level, they had the opportunity specialise on their academic strengths and interest areas.



The proposed 2-6-3-3-3 system, which means students will do two years of pre-school, six years of primary, three years in junior secondary, three years in senior secondary and three years at the university may be a better option to the 8-4-4 system.

As I congratulate the Cabinet Secretary in charge of Education Dr. Fred Matiang'i on his appointment, I hope that his very able team at the Ministry will take into account these proposals. As the Chairman of the National Association of Private Universities in Kenya, the umbrella body of all private universities in Kenya, I want to assure him of our support and co-operation.

I also commend the Commission for University Education for standardizing the rules for both public and private universities. Long gone are the days when a university- whether public or private - could establish a campus just anywhere.

#### **4) Research Grants**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Last Year, I was inducted into the World Entrepreneur of the Year Hall of Fame in Monaco, France. This award proved that our efforts are increasingly being recognized around the world. Today, we are launching a new Strategic Plan that will direct us even further towards conquering the world.

Three months ago, our Directorate of Research and Development led a team from MKU that visited several top universities in Britain. We agreed to partner with among others, the University of Oxford, which is ranked number two in the top 100 World University rankings. History was made during that visit. Please listen carefully for I have a major announcement to make!

Last year, we at Mount Kenya University established the Kenya Christian and Scientific Affiliation to facilitate harmonious interaction between Science and religion. This was after we realized that the research we do at our laboratories is sometimes not well received by a religious community. Some people still believe *“kudungwa sindano ni uchawi”*.

We as Mount Kenya University sought for research grants to fund this initiative. I am happy to announce to you today that we have been granted a whopping Ksh100 million!

This is the first time in post-independence Kenya that a private and indigenous university is receiving such a huge amount of money for research. It is also the first time that a private university in Kenya will conduct research in the area of science and religion.

#### **4) Integrity**

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

As I had mentioned earlier, integrity and accountability are some of the key reasons we have risen to become a world-class university.

At MKU, we take integrity so seriously that we are considering introducing a university common unit on social ethics to be offered across the board.

We have heard of late the many reports about corruption and theft of public money. Public servants who have been entrusted with public money are stealing in order to live in big houses and drive big cars. The right connections have replaced the right qualifications when looking for a job. Corruption has replaced competence. Theft has replaced thrift. If we continue like this, we are going to kill this country. I will tell you a story about a farmer and his hen to illustrate what I mean.

*One day a farmer checked the nest of his hen and found an egg. The egg was yellow and glittering. He took it up, but it was heavy and hard, unlike a normal egg. He wanted to throw it away, because he thought someone had played a trick on him. But he took it home on second thoughts, and soon found to his delight that the egg was pure gold. Every morning the same thing happened. He would go to the chicken house and find his hen had laid a golden egg. He soon became very rich by selling the eggs. As he grew rich, he also became greedy. To get at once all the gold the hen could give, he decided to kill the hen and cut it open to remove the golden eggs. Of course, when he cut open the chicken, he found nothing!*

## **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

The chicken that lays the golden egg is our country Kenya. We the people are the farmer. The golden eggs comes in many forms....tourism, education, minerals, athletics....etc.

Corruption, greed and theft of public money are the equivalent of killing the hen that is laying for us the golden egg. We all have the patriotic duty and responsibility to keep the hen alive!

It is good to see that a number of organizations have come up with initiatives that award honest achievement. This goes a long way to show that one can succeed without taking short cuts. It goes a long way in enhancing values in our society.

On this note, I wish to congratulate Mayur Shah, the Director of Kenafri Industries who has taken over the mantle from me as the Eastern Africa Entrepreneur of the Year. I also wish to thank Ernst & Young for coming up with such initiatives that reward honest excellence.



As I conclude, I wish to thank all students, staff, parents, guardians, sponsors and stakeholders for being with us on this ending successful year. I wish you a merry Christmas and prosperous 2016!