

Mount Kenya University

SPEECH

BY

Prof. Simon N. Gicharu, CBS
CHAIRMAN, BOARD OF DIRECTORS – MKU

AT

**MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY 16TH GRADUATION
CEREMONY THEMED “*THE ROLE OF UNIVERSITIES
IN ENHANCING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GOALS THROUGH COMMUNITY OUTREACH
PROGRAMMES*”**

ON

FRIDAY, 9TH AUGUST, 2019

AT

**MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY HAPPY VALLEY
GROUNDS, THIKA**

1.0 Salutations:

- Chief Guest, Prof. Raymond Macharia, Professor, University of London,
- Guest Speaker, Dr. Charles Mulli, Founder and CEO of Mully Children's Family,
- Prof. John Struthers, Chancellor, Mount Kenya University,
- Madam Jane Nyutu, Co-Founder of Mount Kenya University,
- Members of the University Board of Directors,
- Prof. David K. Serem, Chairman, University Council,
- Members of the University Council,
- Prof. Stanley W. Waudu, Vice-Chancellor, Mount Kenya University,
- Your Excellences, Ambassadors and High Commissioners present (Dr. Richard Masozera, High Commissioner of the Republic of Rwanda),
- Honorable National and County Government leaders present,
- Distinguished Guests,
- Members of Management Board and Senate,
- Staff,
- Graduands and Students,
- Ladies and Gentlemen.

2.0 Preliminaries

I take this opportunity to congratulate the August 2019 graduating class for achieving this milestone in their academic endeavor. I share with you this quote from Mr. John Dewey... *“Education is not preparation for life, Education is Life Itself”*. You have gained useful knowledge in the few years you have been at Mount Kenya University. You have also acquired lots of experiences. Congratulations!

To the parents and guardians; you have been important stakeholders in this process. The University fraternity applauds your contributions and joins you as you enjoy the success that we are celebrating today. Looking back, I appreciate all those who have walked with us over the last 15 graduation ceremonies as well as today in marking the 16th Graduation Ceremony which is already a great success.

A lot of compliments to the University Management headed by the Chancellor, Chairman of the University Council, the Council, Vice - Chancellor, the Senate and all the staff. I urge you all to continue working hard and warming up for MKU's 1000th Graduation Ceremony which will be celebrated when we all shall be gone since individuals will come and go but the University should be a permanent entity. So let us all support the development of our institutions because God has entrusted us with these institutions to ensure their growth today and in the future.

3.0 Rebranding and Launch of Postgraduate Centre at Nairobi Campus

Ladies and Gentlemen, I know a good number graduating today with a Bachelor's degree are contemplating taking a postgraduate degree in order to be more competitive in the job market.

4

I commend those plans and I assure you that the Board of Directors is fully committed to ensuring that we offer you the best training. Recently, I requested the Vice-Chancellor to initiate the process of rebranding of research and postgraduate training at Mount Kenya University. To facilitate this, we launched a Postgraduate Centre at Nairobi Campus. This is a state-of-the-art facility with seminar rooms, a resource centre, consultation rooms and a video conferencing room (Zoom room). The zoom room will make it possible for postgraduate students and especially those in the diaspora to meet and consult with their supervisors via web technologies. In addition, students will be able to present their proposals and defend their work through this platform. The use of this interphase will save time, and costs associated with travelling. It will also make it possible for the diaspora students to interact with their peers through live video feeds.

The resource centre incorporates a library with latest editions of research text books and an e-learning section with computers equipped with statistical software to aid in data analysis. It also has an originality checker software that postgraduate students can use to check originality of their work before submitting it for examination. We intend to develop similar postgraduate training facilities in all our campuses.

4.0 Integrating Industry with Academia through TV47, Telkom and Microsoft Collaborations

Ladies and Gentlemen, as an institution which is committed to practical and industry oriented training, MKU has established TV47 as a hands-on training platform in Journalism and Mass Communication. This model of hands-on training is a common hallmark of the institution. The TV47 station Managing Director is Mr. Eugene Anangwe.

I take this opportunity to congratulate him as he is amongst the graduands today. He is graduating with a First Class Honors in Journalism.

Similarly, we thank TELKOM and Microsoft for their partnerships with us which will innovatively rejuvenate our Open, Distance and Electronic Learning (ODEL) programmes.

5.0 Marking the International Youth 2019 Celebration

This will take place on 12th of August 2019 in Kwale County and the University will join Telkom Kenya in support of transformative Education for the African Youth in marking this day. Through the Youth International 2019 Celebrations, we shall be congratulating the youth and stamping our commitment to provide more opportunities for full development of the youth potentials especially through ICT driven education and innovation.

MKU's ODEL platform and Graduate Enterprise Academy will do all that is possible to embrace the Telkom partnership for enhancement of youth empowerment.

6.0 Promotion of Innovation and Entrepreneurship

Ladies and Gentlemen, the theme of this graduation resonates strongly with my personal story that has brought me to where I am today. Having won the competitive Ernst & Young Eastern Africa Entrepreneur of the Year 2014 Award and receiving the honor of being inducted into the World Entrepreneur of the Year Hall of Fame 2015, many people only saw the glitz and glamour during these two awarding ceremonies. The journey to that moment, however, had begun over 20 years earlier in a less glamorous backstreet office. However, my dream of starting a college was crystal clear.

That dream became Mount Kenya University, which is now a local, regional and global brand. Looking back, I am grateful that I had the courage to start. In my years as an entrepreneur, I have come to realize that entrepreneurship is not about starting a business. It is all about looking for opportunities and exploiting them instead of sitting at home and asking for jobs. There are a thousand and one unexploited opportunities. You need to be courageous to exploit these opportunities and to break barriers that hold many would be entrepreneurs back. At Mount Kenya University, in recognition of these challenges, we have established initiatives that support young entrepreneurs and innovators. For instance, the Graduate Enterprise Academy has championed the acceleration of several businesses run by our alumni through a “boot-camp-type” mentorship programme for the last five (5) years.

This programme is fully sponsored and I encourage the graduands and alumni to take advantage of this opportunity. As a University, we are committed to continue investing in these support structures.

7.0 Mount Kenya University Foundation

Ladies and Gentlemen, every so often, I encounter brilliant students with so much potential but who cannot afford University fees. 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. This semester, the MKU Foundation has offered a 5million worth of scholarships support to needy students.

The Foundation that is under my patronage is in the process of setting up a Ksh.100 million endowment fund and I encourage our newest alumni as well as our partners to support this initiative.

8.0 MKU - Stag Africa Partnership Proposal

We are supporting the Ksh2.5 billion humanitarian grant proposal to establish 3000 rooms here on this land, a proposal which if approved will provide the 2nd most friendly learning environment in Africa after Stellenbosch in South Africa. We shall be supporting exchange delegations between Stellenbosch and MKU to finalize on the proposal.

9.0 Cancer Pandemic

A lot of people have today become self-appointed cancer specialists talking about cancer in all manner of ways sometimes even using pieces of advice that seem superstitious.

Personal Story....

I wish to invite doctors and researchers to come on board, make use of the facilities and opportunity provided jointly by MKU and our partners to ensure that cancer pandemic is arrested once and for all.

10.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, we have made significant strides this year in development of training infrastructure. We also have other projects that are in 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. We appreciate our alumni, our stakeholders including development partners.

THANK YOU AND GOD BLESS YOU ALL