

THE SPEECH OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF SOUTH EASTERN KENYA UNIVERSITY, PROF. GEOFFREY MULUVI, DURING THE FIRST GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON 23RD MAY 2014 AT KITUI MAIN CAMPUS

- The Chancellor, Dr. Titus Naikuni,
- The Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi,
- Former Vice-President, His Excellency Hon. Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka,
- The Chief Justice and President of the Supreme Court of Kenya, Hon. Dr. Willy Mutunga,
- The Senator, Kitui County
- The Governor, Kitui County
- The County Commissioner, Kitui
- Chancellors from Other Universities,
- Chairman of the Council of South Eastern Kenya University, Prof. Louis M. Mumera
- Members of the University Council,
- Vice Chancellors of other Universities present,

- Deputy Vice Chancellors,
- Principals of University Colleges
- The National Assembly Minority Leader, Hon. Francis Nyenze
- Members of Parliament present
- Members of County Assembly present
- SEKU Teaching and non-teaching staff,
- Parents, guardians and sponsors,
- Graduands and Students, and
- Distinguished Guests

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

It gives me much pleasure to welcome you and other distinguished guests to our first graduation ceremony. Mr. Chancellor, with your permission, allow me to acknowledge some of the distinguished visitors who have come to grace our graduation ceremony today before I give my remarks. Today, we are witnessing the graduation of our pioneer students.

These are students who joined the University in 2010 after former Ukamba Agricultural Institute (UKAI) was upgraded to a University College status.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

In this graduation ceremony, we shall present a total of 118 graduands to you for award of Diplomas and conferment of various degrees of the University. The graduands are drawn from one (1) Institute and five (5) Schools of the University as follows:

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| 1. Institute of Mining and Mineral Processing - | 16 Graduands |
| 2. School of Business and Economics - | 54 Graduands |
| 3. School of Agriculture and Veterinary Science - | 18 Graduands |
| 4. School of Environment and Natural Resources Management - | 16 Graduands |
| 5. School of Humanities Students – | 6 Graduands |
| 6. School of Pure and Applied Sciences - | 7 Graduands |

I would like to take this early opportunity to congratulate the graduands for successful completion of their studies.

This particular group faced many challenges especially during the early stages of the establishment of this campus. The University community is very grateful to them for their patience and understanding.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

The students we are presenting to you today have been properly trained and examined. We are confident that the graduating students have been prepared adequately and are ready to play their role in the development of this country. We believe that the graduands will find employment opportunities in various sectors of the economy, not only in this country, but also elsewhere in Africa and the rest of the world. They have also been adequately prepared to be job creators.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

The University has experienced tremendous growth in student's population in the last four (4) years.

The student numbers have grown from 70 in 2010 to the current population of about 5000 students. Another 1,000 are expected to join later this year once Kenya Universities and Colleges Central Placement Board finalises admission of the 2013 KCSE candidates thus bringing the total student population to more than 6,000. We do expect the student's enrolment to continue increasing in the coming years. We expect that by 2025, the University will have a student population of 30,000 or more with a capacity to admit at least 5,000 students on annual basis.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

The University Senate has put in place mechanisms of ensuring that we provide quality education to our students. We have continued to expand our facilities to cater for the rapidly increasing student population. We will also be continuously reviewing our academic programmes to reflect the current market demand.

In addition to the unique academic programmes that have been developed to address challenges facing arid and semi arid lands (ASALs); the University is at an advanced stage in introducing Law and Medical courses.

Our University is in the process of setting up one of the best schools of Engineering. The Engineering workshops are almost complete. We are going to receive equipments worth 305 million from the African Development Bank (ADB) in collaboration with our Ministry of Education, Science & Technology. Some of the equipments have already been delivered and others will be delivered soon. The equipments being delivered are for Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Textile Engineering and Electrical Engineering. With Textile Technology, and in collaboration with our department of Dryland Agriculture, we will strive to revive cotton farming in this region.

The University has also been able to attract and retain high quality teaching staff. At the moment, the University has about 150 teaching members of staff with about half of them having at least a PhD degree.

About 30 of those with Masters Degrees are at an advanced stage of their PhDs studies in various Universities within and outside the country.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

Our strategic plan, lays emphasis in transforming this University to be one of the best in this region with quality facilities where teaching, learning, research and innovation thrive. We plan to convert the 10,000 hectares of land here at the main campus into a ‘university city’ with fully fledged colleges housing different schools and faculties in different corners of the land. These shall be supported by a good road network, shopping centres, residential areas, touristic and recreational facilities, research facilities, nature conservation parks, among others.

In this regard, I am happy to report that we recently received approval from the Public Private Partnership secretariat at the National Treasury to construct hostels through the Public Private Partnership (PPP) concept.

We therefore invite investors from this region and elsewhere to partner with us in construction of hostels and staff houses among other facilities.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

The University has experienced major transformation in the last four (4) years. We have successfully put up new student hostels with a combined capacity to accommodate more than 2,000 students. We have also completed three buildings to serve as offices, lecture halls and research and teaching laboratories. Most of the funds that have been used to put up these facilities have been provided by the Government of Kenya through our parent Ministry. We therefore, most sincerely express our gratitude to the National Government for providing these funds.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

Our academic members of staff have been quite active in research. They have continued to receive research grants from various funding organizations in the country and abroad. Allow me to mention but just a few of these research initiatives.

We have a project on capacity building on integrated water resource management and aquaculture funded by the Government of Netherlands at a tune of 1 million Euros. (Kshs.120 million).

We have had several other projects funded by donors amounting to Kshs.232,393,389.00 bringing the total funding for research from development partners to over Kshs.350 million.

Therefore, I wish to sincerely thank our development partners for supporting our research programmes. I also appeal for more support so that our lecturers can continue to conduct research that can contribute to the socio-economic development of this country.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

The University has embraced Performance Contracting which has become a tool for improving service delivery, transparency, accountability and responsiveness. The University prepares annual performance contracts aligned to the Kenya Vision 2030, Medium Term Plans and University strategic plan and annual work plan.

SEKU has been signing; performance contracts with the Ministry of Higher Education Science & Technology since 2008 with the current performance contract for the financial year 2013/2014 being her 6th cycle contract.

The last time performance contract results were announced we were No. 18 out of the 180 parastatals.

Results for 4th and 5th cycles are yet to be announced but we have continued to perform extremely well based on the scores we attained during evaluation.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

The University has continued to experience a number of challenges since its establishment in 2010. The murram road linking the University with the main Machakos-Kitui road at Kwa-Vonza Market has continued to be a major challenge.

The University has spent a lot of money on regular maintenance of the road as well as in the maintenance of university vehicles that use the road.

Indeed, the poor condition of the road has been a liability to the whole university community and her customers. However, I am happy to report that the current improvements being undertaken are being done by the County Government of Kitui. Our Governor delivered a public lecture here at the University last year and our students made a request to him to help in improving the road.

Our students and the rest of the University community are happy with this good gesture from our County Government.

However, we still appeal to both the national and county governments to come to our aid and assist us by tarmacking the road. I am also aware that the County Government has advertised for street lighting to be erected from the main road to our main gate. This development has been received well by the University community. However, we are also kindly requesting the County Government through the Governor to consider extending the lights to the campus from the main gate.

Mr Chancellor Sir,

The other challenge has been the provision of adequate supply of water to the university.

However, I am happy to report that we have made significant progress in addressing this problem.

We do recognize that, in order to deal with this challenge once and for all, we need our own dedicated water supply line connected to the Masinga- Kitui water pipeline. In addition, we also need to construct a large dam within our 10,000 acres of land.

In this respect, I would also like to appeal to both the national and the County Government of Kitui to help us in addressing this challenge. In the past, we have received a lot of support from the Tana and Athi Water Services Board (TANATHI) and Kitui Water and Sanitation Company (KITWASCO) and we thank them for their continued support.

We have also received funds from the National Government through our Ministry that have been used to construct a 1 million litre water tank and lay a pipeline from the campus to about 12 km to connect to the Masinga water line.

However, the problem of water in Kitui County must be addressed so that institutions located in this county can grow without a lot of difficulties.

As I conclude my remarks, allow me to make some few comments regarding the three parcels of land that the University inherited from UKAI.

These parcels of land were vested to the University through Legal Notice No. 102 of 2008 duly signed by His Excellency the former President Hon. Mwai Kibaki which transferred to the University all rights, liabilities and assets formerly held by the trustees of UKAI. The University has indeed achieved great strides in securing its land despite facing some legal challenges from some unscrupulous individuals trying to acquire the University land illegally. We shall continue to work tirelessly to ensure that the University land is safeguarded against land grabbers who do not have the interests of the University at heart.

We also take this opportunity to express our utmost appreciation to the National Government, the County Government and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology for their continued support in defending the University land.

Finally, I would like, on behalf of the University Management Board and the University Senate, to take this opportunity to once again congratulate our pioneer graduands for successful completion of their studies.

I would like to most sincerely wish them well in their future under-taking.

As you join the working world, bear in mind that hard work, discipline accountability, professionalism and transparency will bear fruits of success in your life. In order to demonstrate our confidence in the quality of our graduands, we have already engaged the top 6 students who had attained first class degrees as graduate assistants with full scholarships for Masters Degree programmes.

Thank you.

It is now my pleasure to invite the Chairman of Council, Prof. Louis Mumera to address the congregation.

PROF. GEOFFREY M. MULUVI, PhD
VICE-CHANCELLOR