

SPEECH BY HON. EZEKIEL MACHOGU, CBS, CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 10th GRADUATION CEREMONY OF JARAMOGI OGINGA ODINGA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, HELD ON FRIDAY, 3rd MARCH, 2023 AT THE UNIVERSITY GRADUATION SQUARE, MAIN CAMPUS, BONDO

The Principal Secretary, State Department for Higher Education and Research, Dr. Beatrice Inyangala;

The Chairman of Council, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Prof. Shem Wandiga;

The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Stephen Agong’;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour to join you on this occasion of the University's 10th Graduation Ceremony and 10th Anniversary since it was Chartered.

I wish to begin by congratulating all the graduands for the enviable feat that they have attained today. I congratulate you for the effort, patience and hard work that has enabled you get to this day. May I also appreciate the parents, guardians, staff and the University leadership for their collective effort in nurturing the graduands.

This is the beginning of a new phase in the lives of many of the graduands. You now have the opportunity to use the knowledge, skills and training you have gained during your time in University for the benefit of the society. I wish you all the best in this new chapter of your lives.

Chancellor Sir

As the University marks its 10th Anniversary, I wish to commend the Council and management for the work they have done to lay a strong foundation for the University.

I am glad to note the accomplishments that the University has realised in promoting science and technology as drivers of economic development. By setting up a Centre of Excellence in the Sustainable Use of Insects for Food and Feed in East and Central Africa, for example, the University has taken its place among the few institutions that are focused on the area of food security in the region.

May I also commend the University's leadership for forging and maintaining international collaborations in research and innovation. In particular, the 10-year partnership with Flemish institutions of higher learning has definitely had the

effect of enhancing your capacity for research and outreach, and placed the University in a position to produce globally competitive graduates.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Blue Economy and Research Hub that was recently launched here by His Excellency the President is itself a major capital accomplishment. The Hub, if efficiently utilized, will serve as a vehicle for improving the lives of the people of Kenya and beyond, by promoting research and innovation in the area of Blue Economy. It also provides this University

with an opportunity to foster linkages with other research institutions across the globe in the area of Blue Economy.

As this University transits into the next decade, I wish to assure you of the Government's commitment to support the university sub-sector. The Kenya Kwanza administration believes that the quality education and research are major determinants of socio-economic and political development. This is why the Government is keen and deliberate on comprehensive reforms to ensure that the education sector performs optimally.

Indeed, as you all know, **ladies and gentlemen**, one of the first actions that His Excellency the President took upon assuming office was to set up a Presidential Working Party on Education Reform. The Working Party has a broad mandate to collect views and make recommendations on reforming the education sector, including the university sub-sector. It is anticipated that the Working Party will make solid recommendations that will help alleviate many of the challenges that the sub-sector is facing.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Kenya Kwanza administration has no doubt about the essential role of **public** universities in

promoting access to education and developing human capital. It has never, therefore, been in the administration's plan to privatize public universities as has recently been alleged in some quarters.

On the contrary, the administration is keen on ensuring that university education is accessible, affordable and attainable to all students, regardless of their location or level of income. One of the flagship initiatives we are undertaking in this regard is the establishment of the National Open University of Kenya.

The Government will continue to support public universities by developing an enabling legal and policy environment, and by providing funding through capitation and loans to students.

May I also take this opportunity to clarify that no decision has been made to increase university student fees. While such suggestions have been made to the Working Party in the context of stakeholder participation, **they remain mere proposals**. Let us await the recommendations of the Working Party before an informed decision is made on the way forward.

Chancellor Sir,

While the Government will continue to play its part, universities must also play their part in securing their sustainability going into the future.

Our public universities should adopt the posture of 21st Century universities and position themselves to thrive in the emerging challenges and opportunities.

The programmes that our universities offer should be tailored to the demands of the national, regional and global

development agenda. This will make the universities and their graduates relevant to society's socio-economic needs.

One way of fostering relevance, **ladies and gentlemen**, would be by our universities specializing in certain niche' areas, instead of being generalists. Relevant, focused and specialized programmes are the primary ways of attracting students and funding. In the era of increased regional integration, universities need to look beyond our national boundaries and expand their catchment areas to the entire region. Boosting online presence and access will be key in this regard.

Chancellor Sir,

Universities also need to craft innovative ways of resource mobilization. They need to commercialize their research output and provide relevant innovations to the market. There is also need to think about emerging resource mobilization and project financing models, such as Public Private Partnerships, for infrastructure develop in areas such as hostels.

The graduands here today are joining the alumni community of this University. They are an important part of the history of this University. They should also become an important

part of the University's future. Our Universities should therefore strengthen mechanisms for tapping into their wide alumni networks, as other universities have done across the world, to mobilise resources in support of scholarship.

As I conclude, I once again congratulate all of you for the milestone of the 10th Anniversary. I congratulate the graduands for their achievement, and wish them all the very best in their coming endeavours.

Thank you and God bless you all!