



**SPEECH BY AMB. SIMON NABUKWESI, THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY,
STATE DEPARTMENT FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION AND RESEARCH,
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, ON THE OCCASION OF THE 8TH
GRADUATION CEREMONY OF JARAMOGI OGINGA ODINGA
UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY HELD ON FRIDAY, 18TH
DECEMBER 2020 AT THE UNIVERSITY GRADUATION SQUARE**

- The Chancellor, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Prof. Isaiah I.C Wakindiki
- Members of the University Council
- The Vice Chancellor Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Prof. Stephen Agong'
- Vice-Chancellors of Sister Universities
- Members of the University Senate and Management Board
- Staff
- Graduands
- Parents and Guardians
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

I want to join the entire Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology fraternity in celebrating its' 8th Graduation ceremony. We are gathered here to celebrate years of hard work and devotion as we reflect on your achievements and the future of your life and career.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

Indeed, this year has been very challenging, not only for the, students but as a county and continent as a whole. Despite the challenges as a country, we seek to enhance our competitiveness worldwide in line with the Vision 2030. That is why the Government has emphasized the role of STEM in the future of economic transformations of the country. Through research and innovation, universities provide the foundations and impetus necessary for such transformations as they train graduates who are not only ready for immediate absorption into a technologically-oriented economy but who are also grounded enough to be fully functional in an ever-changing work environment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Universities now more than ever are being encouraged to produce graduands who are innovative and creative; those who can develop practical solutions to real problems facing the world.

We are not the only nation focusing on technology and innovation. There is no doubt that research and innovation are critical to improving the lives of Kenyans, making our country globally competitive, and boosting economic growth and generating the much needed jobs for our youth. This country has been a leader in the region in terms of education, manufacturing, and investment. We must continue providing technological and research leadership in the region and beyond but more specifically coming up with real solutions for challenges facing Kenyans daily

This virtual graduation is evidence that the use of technology is no longer a substitute, but the new normal. Since the pandemic hit the country in March, we have achieved many milestones geared ensuring the delivery of programmes through e-learning.

I would like to commend the management of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of science and technology for embracing online learning and teaching that has enabled these graduands to graduate today as scheduled. I am aware that the rest of the students have already or are in the process of concluding their semester examinations.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Even as we seek for avenues to enable our learners to access education, we should not lose focus on addressing the key issues of quality of teaching and the challenges facing the students and lecturers as critical stakeholders in the implementation of e-learning.

The Ministry will work with universities and partners in the education sector to support the successful implementation of e-learning. I urge universities to pursue opportunities for partnership with private investors to ensure that students have access to the opportunities they need to tap into the vast academic resources that online learning can offer. In addition to improving the infrastructure, universities should also invest in building the capacity of the academic staff to offer effective e-learning. This is also the time to institute the much-needed reforms by reviewing programmes and aligning them with the development agenda of the country.

The Competence Based Curriculum being implemented by the Ministry of Education emphasizes multi-literacy, multi-tasking, life-long learning, and a competency-based education for our learners with greater focus on practical competences necessary for life, critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, effective communication and team building skills.

Technology has become a necessity in education. Preparing students to use technology has in that regard become an unavoidable reality.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

The COVID 19 crisis is an opportunity for the higher education sector to demonstrate the importance of research and expertise available at Higher Education Institutions around the world. Hopefully, this recognition of the importance of research and expertise of Higher Education by society in which scientific evidence and knowledge will gain fundamental pillars of society.

Technology transfer is paramount for the growth and development of communities and the country as a whole. We have continuously emphasized on research, innovation and technology as the key drivers of development in the world today. Given the scarce resources allocated to the University for expansion purposes, it would be important for the University to engage with private entities to attract investments for supplementing the Government's efforts in the development of infrastructure.

I am glad to note that Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology is one of the universities that continues to increase its research portfolio. The University should maximize the funding opportunities from institutions such as the National Research Fund as an alternative source of funding.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is a growing demand, from the labour market, for an increased level of skills and competencies required for a modern, globally-competitive and knowledge-based economy, and the need for continual professional upgrading. Universities need to produce graduands who are grounded enough to be fully functional in an ever-changing work environment.

The University has a task to observe quality, through review of curriculum that meets industry needs to be based on regular stakeholder consultation and to implement practical components in addressing the knowledge and skills gaps in the job market.

Mr Chancellor sir,

The role of University Education cannot be overstated. It is mandatory for creating a pool of skilled human capital in various facets of our economy and for enhancing productivity. Our Universities need to remain focused on producing top-notch human capital that competes favorably and is relevant to current needs. The programmes developed by universities should be relevant and add value to our National Development agenda. Universities should endeavor to conduct cutting edge research and innovations that will put the country on the world map.

With the world, today becoming a very competitive global village coupled with adoption of top-notch technologies to gain leadership in the job market the Government has therefore put the necessary premium in University Education because of the pivotal role it plays in creation, adaptation and use of knowledge that is crucial in transforming Kenya into a knowledge-based economy.

The Ministry of Education is committed to providing the appropriate support and an enabling environment to enhance the potential of universities to grow into credible Institutions that produce high caliber skilled labour into the job market.

With this few remarks, may I wish you good luck in all your future endeavors.

Thank you and God Bless!

