



**SPEECH BY PROF. STEPHEN G. AGONG', PhD, FAAS, VICE-CHANCELLOR,
JARAMOGI OGINGA ODINGA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY DURING THE 8TH GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON
18th DECEMBER 2020 AT THE GRADUATION SQUARE.**

- The Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Prof. George Magoha
- The Principal Secretary, State Department for University Education and Research, Amb. Simon Nabukwesi
- The Chancellor, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology, Dr. Vimal Shah
- Chairman of Council, Prof. Isaiah I.C Wakindiki
- Members of the University Council
- Vice-Chancellors of Sister Universities
- Members of the University Management Board
- Members of Senate
- Staff
- Graduands
- Parents and Guardians

- **Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen**

It's with a great pleasure that we welcome you to Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology's 8th virtual graduation ceremony. A warm welcome to our distinguished guests for participating in this event!

Let me congratulate the graduands for the hard work and determination that made us gather here. I want to thank the parents and guardians for the support accorded to the students in enabling them complete their academic studies successfully.

I would like to pay great tribute to all those staff who have spent so many hours transferring to online teaching and assessment in recent months. This has been the result of much hard work, and I am very grateful to colleagues in faculty, the Centre for e- Learning, and others for all that you have done to make this day a success. I also wish to pay great tribute to the entire administrative staff who have done so much to ensure that the campus continues to be conducive for the students here, and for those who have been contributing towards COVID-19 research activities. All these activities have been greatly valued, and members of our University should rightly feel proud of, and grateful for, the commitment shown.

While Covid 19 has disrupted plans for the traditional commencement, the challenges brought about by the pandemic, makes this ceremony extraordinary. We are now faced with a pandemic that we need to find innovative ways of tackling it and prevent its' spread. We can no longer

shelve our plans forever. It is for this reason that today we host this virtual graduation ceremony. We should feel happy, though, that we could gather here well and healthy, since there are millions of people in the world, who suffer from this vicious virus.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a university, we have to take a circumspect and responsible approach to ensure that health risks are mitigated. We have taken the very difficult decision to host the December 2020 graduation ceremony virtually. This is a decision we did not take lightly. Not only do we need to think of the health and safety of our community, but we also face a particularly unpredictable situation over which we have limited control where plans may need to change at short notice as the environment changes.

This does not however mean that our students cannot celebrate with those closest to them wherever they may be. I encourage students to celebrate in their own way safely at home and to share these moments with us. This year is a historic and unique year; the pandemic has created many problems, similarly it has opened up many opportunities depending on how you handle the circumstance. I appreciate how weary you may be feeling after months of uncertainty and upheaval. Yet I also know that we have learned a great deal and made significant gains during this pandemic: that it has shown the very best this University can be and can do. So, without for a moment downplaying the difficulties this academic year has brought us, I do

want to celebrate our achievements and to speak positively, indeed glowingly, of the work JOOUST is doing.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

This graduation marks another milestone in the history of this University towards its contribution to the national and global economy of this nation. We are churning out skilled manpower to spearhead socio-economic development of the country.

As the University Management, we are satisfied with the progress so far made in key strategic areas. We have made significant strides and our commitment to making this a university with a difference remains absolute. Management has remained a strong team under the guidance and direction of a strong University Council with members who are highly experienced.

Ladies and gentlemen,

JOOUST is focused on producing students who can help the country address the 21st Century challenges by being job creators rather than job seekers. We have re-aligned our academic programmes and research activities to the “Big Four Agenda” for National development so as to anchor them with the industry.

The University has greatly embraced ICT technology in every aspect. We have substantially invested in the e-Laboratory. The laboratories are being used by lecturers and the e-learning students to access learning material and for online teaching during the pandemic. The University has

digitized services for more efficient service delivery through the Enterprise resource planning system.

Our faculty and colleagues continue to support our community of students by working and delivering instruction remotely. We are fortunate that the University already has robust systems in place to enable online and distance study. We are therefore able to provide advice and support to some of the University's member institutions, who are moving their programmes to at times like these through the Centre for e-learning that has enabled our students to graduate as scheduled. From September our students and staff were engaged in online trainings which culminated into online classes and eventually exams. Running exams remotely was also a major achievement, with over 50 exams made available in over 8 weeks.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a university of science and technology, we have aspired to enhance the country's socio-economic development through disseminating new knowledge, developing cutting edge technology and innovations and offering solutions that are geared towards improving the quality of life.

The University is currently constructing a modern research complex complete with hostels and conference facilities at its 37-acre (14.8ha) piece of land at Miyandhe Campus which is at the shores of Lake Victoria a distance of 20km away from the main campus. The Centre will support water research and related environmental challenges described in the proposed research project.

To strengthen teaching and research in agriculture, the University has established the School of Agricultural and Food Sciences located on a 38-acre (15.2ha) piece of land in Siaya township which is 22km away from the main campus. The upcoming Tuition Block Complex on the 42-acre (16.8ha) piece of land at Achiego Campus, a distance of 3km away from the main Campus will house teaching and learning spaces and laboratories for the schools of Engineering and Technology and School of Spatial Planning and Natural Resource Management. At Kapiyo, 20 km away from the main Campus in and also on the shores of Lake Victoria, the University has acquired a 19-acre (7.6ha) pristine piece of land, with relatively intact native forest species. The land has been earmarked for the development of a Botanical Garden. This will serve the purpose of research undertaking and *ex situ* conservation of the biodiversity around Lake Victoria.

We have placed great emphasis on internationalization of our programmes as a way of exposing our staff and students to different experiences from abroad and facilitating technology transfer. We have thus expanded our network of international partnerships, and collaborations. We now have effective and regular student and staff exchange programmes with universities in China, Sweden and Germany.

Mr. Chancellor Sir,

As an Oasis of knowledge, we are committed to contributing towards Kenya's Socio-economic Development Blue-Print in line with Vision 2030. We seek to achieve this by laying emphasis in technology transfer, scientific research,

innovation and collaboration with the industry. Peaceful co-existence among us as community of scholars is critical just like the cement is the building blocks.

The University continues to carry out resource mobilization by seeking funding support from both in-country and external funding sources. The University continues to build capacity in research by facilitating researchers to develop fundable research proposals. During the year, a total of eleven (11) research grants from individual researchers and research teams were submitted to donors for funding. A total of Ksh. 104,8 Million was received for donors to support research activities. During the same period, newly funded research projects by individual researchers worth 71.9 Million was received for various funding agencies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As I conclude, I would like to express our gratitude to the Ministry of Education and for their support to the University.

These are challenging times, which have required an enormous amount of rapid decision making, planning, and understanding from all. I am sincerely grateful to the entire JOOUST community: students, staff, alumni, donors, friends and partners – for the part they are playing in the University’s response. In conclusion, I call each of you to action, to go out from there, with confidence, with our blessings and best wishes, and work actively towards living a good and productive life.

I wish you a Merry Christmas, stay safe and may God bless you all!