



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

**SPEECH TO BE DELIVERED BY THE VICE
CHANCELLOR, PROF GEORGE A.O. MAGOHA DURING
THE ORIENTATION WEEK FOR FRESHERS 2014/2015
ACADEMIC YEAR ON THURSDAY JANUARY 16, 2014
AT 2.30 P.M. AT TAIFA HALL**

The Deputy Vice Chancellors

The College Principals

Deans and Directors

Student leaders

Staff

Students

Ladies and gentlemen

It is with great pleasure that I welcome all of you to the University of Nairobi. I congratulate you for your excellent performance in the KCSE Examination which enabled you to gain admission to the most prestigious institution of higher learning in the country and region. You are among the over 10,000 first years who have been selected competitively to join this great university to pursue the academic programme of your choice.

You are joining the University slightly earlier than has been the tradition, after the administration embarked on a normalization programme which will be completed in September 2014, when last year's KCSE group joins

the University; hardly 9 months after their examinations. The normalization programme is meant to align our academic calendar with the best international academic practices and also eliminate the unnecessary delay in admission that affected our local public universities since the double intake of 1990. This orientation week therefore marks the first day of your long sojourn with us and we look forward to the end when we graduate you successfully.

Ladies and gentlemen, the University of Nairobi continues to be a pacesetter, not only in Kenya, but also in the region. We have trained over 161,000 graduates in different professions who serve in various

key sectors locally and regionally, our current number of students is 68,000 and we have over 5,400 members of staff. The University of Nairobi is thus a leading African university with a commendable status in the rest of the world. In the latest webometric ranking for instance we are first among over 66 local institutions and 14 out of 974 universities in Africa. Worldwide we are positioned 1624 among 21,451 ranked universities. We are also the only public organization which was ranked Excellent in the government performance contracting exercise.

Our strong positioning is due to the quality of the students that we admit, as well as the quality of the

academic staff that the University engages. Thirdly, it is the quality of learning and teaching resources that the university avails to staff and students, the quality of the learning environment and the services enjoyed by our staff and students. It is my belief therefore, that in pursuit of your academic goals, you too will play your role in uplifting the standards of this great University.

Ladies and gentlemen, the University is an academic environment, therefore, you are required to attend classes, undertake tutorials, practicals, assignments and examinations as directed by your lecturers. Those who fail to meet our academic expectations should

expect stiff penalties. Our staff is ready and committed to teaching and empowering you with new skills; you in turn must consult them whenever you have any academic problems. In addition, two offices - the Dean of Students and the Special Students' Advisor are open to deal with other problems that you may encounter. I encourage you to make good use of the resources at your disposal and we strongly believe that you will find your niche and settle down to pursue your academic interests.

Ladies and gentlemen, we expect that you will be exemplary achievers, world champions, and trend setters in your endeavors as you undertake your studies here at the University, including participating

actively in club activities and professional associations which will provide you with the opportunity to acquire leadership and personal skills, which you cannot get in a formal class or lesson. The time you will spend in the University will be important for each one of you in specific and personal ways, but overall, each one of you should experience growth in intellectual knowledge, personality, cultural enrichment, building personal friendships and career planning.

I want to sound a caution here, that you should be conscious of the environment around you. While the University of Nairobi is a very safe environment however, its location in the CBD, however predisposes it to various security risks. The Chief Security Officer

alerted you of the dark spots, but I want to caution you to avoid certain places at night especially when you are unaccompanied. The areas around the Uhuru Highway Tunnel, Museum Gate, the Serena Bus Stop among others, should be avoided at all costs, after 7.00 p.m. Also avoid going to town at night unaccompanied. It is our duty to do community policing and ensure each others safety. Feel free therefore to report any suspicious looking persons to the security offices so that appropriate action can be taken immediately. Also let us support the government initiative of enhancing security in our county, I am encouraging you to know your neighbours in the halls of residence and in the estates as part of Nyumba kumi initiative meant to secure our country

Ladies and gentlemen, University life will accord you a lot of freedom, with its own social risks. I urge you to keep off activities that will not contribute positively to your future. Such activities include: use of drugs, destructive habits and, bad association, among others. The choice of who to associate with is yours; the sort of company you keep determines how empowered you will be or how it will lower your opportunities. Again, recognize that political groups will try to woo you, be discerning because identifying with the wrong groups can negatively affect your academic and career prospects. Other risks include contracting sexually transmitted infections among them the HIV/Aids scourge which is claiming many lives in the country,

including those of members of the University community. I urge you all to lead responsible lives and avoid engaging in risky sexual behaviour.

Another emerging problem which students must guard against is alcohol and drug abuse. For starters, possession and use of illicit drugs is both a breach of the rules and regulations governing the conduct of students and also a criminal offence punishable under the penal code of the laws of Kenya. Those found to be in possession of drugs therefore, risk expulsion from the University and prosecution in the courts of law. Please resist the temptation to engage in these destructive habits because the consequences are dire.

At the University of Nairobi, we do not get involved in partisan politics. We are a state agency of Government. We are loyal to the state of Kenya and the Government of the day by law established. We are therefore loyal to the government of Hon. Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta a state president. We shall therefore, not tolerate participation in partisan politics by students within the precincts of the University. We however encourage you to lawfully participate in student activities and to be part of the democratic culture that we are nurturing among our students. We have one umbrella student union (SONU), which represents all students. Indeed, SONU is represented at all decision making organs of the University – from the Halls level all the way to the University Council. I am sure our

student leaders have guided you on how to join and participate in their activities. We also encourage you to join many professional organizations (over 200) which represent different professional interests of the students.

At the University of Nairobi we have not prescribed any formal dress code for students, save for the College of Health Sciences. It is however, the responsibility of students and members of staff to observe standards that subscribe to modesty and decency in both dress and manner. By so doing, you are respecting yourself and those around you and above all you are a point of reference or a mentor who will influence others.

My dear students, you have joined a University that is conscious of the environment and has a policy that clearly demonstrates its firm commitment to the protection of the environment as an integral part of good institutional practice, and we are providing leadership in this aspect locally as well as internationally. As incoming members of the University of Nairobi community, you have an important role to play in the continued realization of our environmental goals and objectives. We shall therefore expect you to contribute in transforming the University to green and sustainable campuses through minimization of waste generated in your various campuses.

Further, you will also be expected to play an important role in reducing energy and water consumption in the University without affecting the quality of your learning environment, and participating in other activities that positively contribute to a cleaner and healthier environment for the University community and our neighbours. Indeed, you are encouraged to participate in a range of environmental activities in the University, including environmental awareness campaigns which will be conducted at your campuses in the course of the year.

Today, we induct you formally into the University community, with other orientation activities expected to follow until you start your classes next week. The

orientation week will usher in the most unforgettable and rewarding experiences in your life as you build your career at the University of Nairobi.

With those remarks, I wish you the most fulfilling and rewarding experience at this great University.

Thank you.