ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY PROF. BARNABAS NAWANGWE
AT THE CEREMONY OF INSTALLATION AS VICE CHANCELLOR OF
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY ON 14TH SEPTEMBER 2017

Your Excellency Gen. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, President of the Republic of
Uganda and visitor to Makerere University;

The Hon. Minister of Education and Sports and First Lady, Mama Janet
Museveni;

The Chancellor of Makerere University, Prof. Ezra Suruma;
Honourable Ministers;
The Governor, Bank of Uganda;
Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners;
The Chairman Makerere University Council, Eng. Dr. Charles Wana Etyem;
The Chairperson of the Search Committee, Hon. Irene Ovonji-Odida;
The Chairman, Appointments Board, Makerere University;
The Out-going Vice Chancellor, Prof. John Ddumba-Sentamu;
My Colleagues the Vice Chancellors and Rectors;
Hon. Members of Parliament;
Members of Makerere University Council;
Former Chancellors;
Former Vice Chancellors;
Members of Management;
Senior Government Officials;
Principals and Deans;
Members of Senate;
The President, Vice President and Speaker of the Students Guild;
Members of Staff;
Our Dear Students;
Invited Guests;
Ladies and Gentlemen!

INTRODUCTION

Allow me begin by thanking the Almighty God for His Grace and Benevolence in giving us our Great Country Uganda, our Great University Makerere and for enabling me to witness my own dream of becoming the Vice Chancellor of this Great Institution.

I wish to thank Your Excellency and Mama Janet Museveni for gracing this ceremony with your personal presence and for the great love you have for Makerere University and for higher education in Uganda. Your presence, I believe the first by a President and Minister of Education at the installation of a Vice Chancellor of Makerere University is indeed testimony to the goodwill you have for our Great Institution and it makes me very proud.

Similarly, I wish to thank the Chancellor of Makerere University, Prof. Ezra Suruma, the Chairman of the University Council, Eng. Dr. Charles Wana Etyem and the entire Council; the Search Committee for the Vice Chancellor, the Senate, members of staff, students and the entire University Community for the trust they have placed in me by appointing me to the prestigious position of Vice Chancellor of Makerere University.

I take this opportunity to thank the former Chancellors and Vice Chancellors for the great contribution they made in building this great institution. In particular I wish to thank the out-going Vice Chancellor for his dedicated service to the University for the last five years.
Finally, I wish to thank my wife Susan and family, and friends around the globe, who have given me enormous support and offered their prayers and fasted in my bid for the job of Vice Chancellor of Makerere University.

Your Excellency, Hon. Minister, Mr. Chancellor Sir, Ladies and Gentlemen, I assume the responsibilities of Vice Chancellor of Makerere University with utmost pride and with a sense of indebtedness to the great men and women, who have built this great institution over the last nine decades, sometimes through very trying moments. I salute Governor Phillip Mitchell, who in 1937 mooted the idea of transforming Makerere from a Technical College to a post-secondary institution, Katikiro Nsibirwa, who gave his life in order that Makerere might exist and the Vice Chancellors and Guild leaders of the seventies, who struggled to keep the independence of Makerere as an independent academic institution during very difficult times. We all owe these great men and women a great deal.

I assume the leadership of this Great Institution at very interesting times in the history of our Continent, our Country and our University. After more than 3000 years when the cradle of civilisation Egypt collapsed, Africa is once again set to rise from the ruins and assume her rightful position among the great nations of the world. After many years of instability that followed the independence of our beloved Country, we are set to pull our people out of poverty and attain middle income status. After years of brain drain and persecution, Makerere University has regained her position as the leading institution of academic excellence in Africa and among the best 500 universities in the world. We are also ranked the top black university on earth. All this could not have been possible if it were not for the peace and stability ushered in by the gallant men and women many of whom shed their blood for this patriotic cause and I salute them. I must also pay tribute to our development partners who have supported us over these years, especially with funding research. For more than ninety years, Makerere has provided academic leadership to this region and produced great leaders, scientists and all categories of human resource for our Country and Region. But as the development agenda of our Country changes so must Makerere.
CHALLENGES

Over the last two decades, Makerere has experienced many challenges in her administrative function. Most of these challenges have been due to inadequate funding adversely affecting staff welfare, but we understand the historical challenges our Country has faced in the past. The University has also experienced several incidences of unrest by students over this period again mainly due to lack of resources, which has affected their welfare. I must thank the Government for the timely intervention in enhancing staff salaries, giving much needed breathing space to the University. I urge the Government to take the pledge of enhancing the salary of a professor up to UGX 15 million and taking over the entire wage bill to its conclusive end in the shortest time possible. With the Government intervention we must re-think our strategy and re-position Makerere as the crucial partner to Government in the effort to transform our Country in the shortest time possible.

Your Excellency, Hon. Minister, Makerere has faced challenges of losing land to land grabbers and we are persistently in court with them. Currently, we are battling for our land in Makindye and Katanga and the battle is tough. We also have the issue of the Church of Uganda land on which the College of Veterinary medicine sits and there appears to be no solution in sight. We have written to the Justice Bamugemeire Land Commission and we hope to find a solution there. Your personal intervention in this matter is urgently needed, Your Excellency.

Our Non-tax revenue has been steadily dropping due to decrease in student numbers. At the same time, all our costs have gone up. We continue to grapple with the heavy debt burden, but we are immensely obliged to the Government for taking over part of our budget, especially pension arrears.

Makerere lacks an integrated information management system and this has severely affected some of our core functions, particularly the management of our academic records. The relief we though CEMAS would bring was short-lived as Government decided to discontinue the project. However, despite all these and other challenges, Makerere has soldiered on due to the patriotic spirit of our staff and the resilience of our inquisitive students.
MY STRATEGY

We must re-position Makerere to more decisively contribute to Uganda’s development agenda. I am totally convinced that Makerere University is the essential engine required for the total transformation of Uganda from a peasantry to a middle-income society. In order to achieve this goal, Makerere will have to more than double her research output, integrate a culture of innovation and streamline her relations with Government departments.

Our strategy is embedded in the following four strategic directions:

i. Re-branding and Quality of service delivery:
ii. Academic Reform:
iii. Administrative and Financial Re-structuring and Sustainability:
iv. Institutional and Human Resource Development

Under Re-branding and Quality of service delivery, we will re-train all our staff in customer care. We will improve all processes that enable our students to have a holistic experience of university life. The interventions will include introduction of central examination marking in order to minimize delays in release of student results and also be able to issue testimonials and transcripts to students in a timely manner, institute a monitoring and evaluation tool to track teaching and learning, strengthen committees that deal with sexual harassment, ease registration through use of students with expertise in IT, as well as other interventions. Every effort will be made to re-develop the dilapidated sports facilities at the University. The lack of sports facilities negatively affects the health of the mind of our students and many times resort to riots to release their energy. Ultimately, the goal is to re-develop the main sports grounds into a multi-purpose stadium, starting with an indoor stadium to accommodate the 3rd World Universities Netball Championship, which Makerere will host in September next year on behalf of Uganda. We are currently fund-raising for this very important facility and I call upon all our stakeholders to extend their support to the project.

Under Academic Reform, we will restructure all our courses and programmes to make them more practical and relevant to the needs of our society, implement the full college system (note that I have already appointed the College Review
Committee), operationalize e-learning and distance education across the entire university and aggressively move towards increasing the proportion of graduate students. We will gradually manage our undergraduate student numbers and aggressively increase the graduate student numbers. This will enhance research capacity and output leading to increased innovation. We will engage Government with a view that Government re-instates sponsorship of graduate programmes. We will operationalize the Makerere University Press in order to enable our researchers publish locally, which will also enable the local community benefit from the research done here. Additionally, we will establish a technology transfer office to help commercialise the many innovations by our students and staff.

Under Administrative and Financial Re-structuring and Sustainability, we will embark on an ambitious programme to invest on our prime lands (teaching hospital, five star hotel, upper and middle income apartments and modern student hostels). According to my preliminary estimates, successful investment on the University’s land will more than double our annual Non-tax Revenue and reduce our dependence on the treasury towards our budget from 70% currently to less than 30% within twenty years. We will engage Government and the Private sector with our plan in order to secure buy-in and investment in the project. We will also introduce measures to reduce losses due to wastage of electricity and water, including repairing the dilapidated infrastructure. We will lobby Government to take over the entire wage bill. We will establish research grants offices at all colleges using the available resources in order to increase on the research revenue. We will also involve students in the management of some functions in order to reduce expenditure on hired staff. We will engage the private sector and all Government departments in order to tap into the resources available there. We will streamline management at the centre and at the colleges by making management more inclusive. Apart from the Top Management Committee, we will introduce the Management Committee, which will include College Principals and Heads of administrative units and a Management Consultative Forum, which will include representation from staff associations and the Students Guild. We will implement a transparent communication strategy.

Under Institutional and Human Resource Development, we will continue with our staff development plans using our own resources and with support from
development partners. We will continue lobbying Government to fully implement the pledge to enhance salaries. We will operationalize the health insurance scheme with effect from start of 2018. We will establish housing support schemes in collaboration with other stakeholders with the aim of enabling our young faculty acquire their own houses and reduce expenditure on rented accommodation. We will operationalize the management information system developed by the College of Health Sciences across the entire University. We will continue with infrastructure development to support the academic function.

CONCLUSION

Your Excellency, Hon. Minister, Mr. Chancellor Sir, Ladies and Gentlemen! In conclusion I wish to state that Makerere is a great university by any standards. But Makerere can and will become even greater and more relevant to our Country. But in order to achieve that, we must uphold our professional integrity as staff and the students must exercise maximum discipline. Uganda has made enormous sacrifices and invested in us, we must give back to our dear motherland in double measure. I wish to make this solemn promise: That I will endeavor to execute the authority entrusted to me with maximum transparency and absolute humility, in order to provide much needed leadership to my large team of more than 5000 employees, so that TOGETHER, we can lift Makerere to the epitome of academic excellence and make Uganda proud, God being my guide.

I thank you.

As WE BUILD FOR THE FUTURE!

God bless you all!