

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

ADDRESS BY THE CHANCELLOR

PROFESSOR GEORGE MONDO KAGONYERA

ON

THE OCCASION OF THE 60TH GRADUATION

CONGREGATION

OF

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

JANUARY 18TH - 22ND 2010

The Vice Chancellor Makerere University
Your Lordships the Judges of the Judicature
Honourable Minister of Education and Sports
Honourable Ministers
Honourable Members of Parliament
Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Religious Leaders
Your Worship the Mayor Kampala City
Representatives of Government Ministries, Departments and
Agencies
Chairperson and Members of Makerere University Council
Vice-Chancellors, Rectors and Principals from sister
universities
The University Management
Members of the University Senate
Members of Staff of Makerere University
Parents and Guardians
Graduands
Media Corps
Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me once again take this opportunity to welcome you to Makerere University at this 60th Graduation Ceremony of Makerere University.

It is poignant that today is the 60th graduation of Makerere University in her 87 year history. In human life 60 years is the onset of old age, when we are expected to retire into private life. For institutions however, the opposite is true; like wine, the older it gets, the better it becomes. It is therefore my sincere hope that as we celebrate this 60th Graduation ceremony, the quality of our graduates like well matured wine should be getting better.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate all of you who have successfully completed your studies. It is no mean achievement on your part as many have fallen by the wayside in the long journey through the many stages of the education system. While you who have succeeded go home and celebrate, let us not forget those who not made it this far. As a nation, it is a tragedy for which we should find a permanent solution. We should encourage all stakeholders in the education and policy sector to find means to ensure that we register 100% completion rates in our universities. It is also all the more reason that the privileged one who have come this far should really cherish your qualifications and work to protect your names as professionals.

This graduation ceremony is even more special as we shall be honouring two exceptional and great sons of Africa, H.E. President Y.K. Museveni and Mzee Rashid Kawawa, founding member of TANU, a former Prime Minister and Vice President of the United Republic of Tanzania with Honorary Doctor of Laws Degrees of Makerere University.

I am also particularly honoured that as Chancellor I have been the one to confer awards upon some of the greatest names in Africa; Professor Ali A. Mazrui, Dr. Benjamin Mkapa. Our only regret is that as Mzee Kawawa passed away on 31st December 2009, we shall hold a special congregation to confer these awards upon Their Excellencies. May his soul rest in eternal peace. However, even in death the legacy of Mzee Rashid Mfaume Kawawa will live on.

Ladies and gentlemen, this week we are graduating 13,766 students in what is so far the biggest number to ever graduate from Makerere. As a University we are proud of this achievement. It is a strong testimony to that we are playing a very important part in creating a critical mass of professionals who are expected to drive the development agenda of our country Uganda.

However, while this is a significant contribution in that regard, let me hasten to add that it is also time for us to take time to re-examine our outputs in terms of relevance to our development needs. It is incumbent upon us to take a closer look at the quality of our programmes, the effectiveness of our methods of delivery and ultimately the quality of our graduates. Questions from the public regarding the quality of our services should not be taken lightly, but rather acted upon to ensure we retain our relevance and competitive advantage. Like I mentioned earlier, wine gets better as it ages, so Makerere should get better as she matures into a world class university.

To the new management team that has recently assumed office, the challenge I have described above is real. All eyes are on you to deliver on the change that we desire, the change that we expect at Makerere. For too long we have spent a lot of time and endeavour on things that do not matter and little of it on the more critical things. I am therefore pleased to learn of the new initiatives that have been taken up to address a number of issues.

I am particularly pleased with the idea of developing strategic partnerships and collaborations. I am a firm believer in the notion of strategic partnerships for they are the surest way to get the best out of and for the institution. I am therefore pleased to learn that there is a growing emphasis on the development of partnerships between Makerere and various government Ministries, Departments and Agencies as well as the private sector. Through such partnerships we should be able to maximise our opportunities and expand the scope of our contribution to the nation's growth and development.

Let me emphasise here that world over, universities are the spearheads of the national development agendas. Through research and innovation, universities can generate new knowledge and offer local solutions to local problems. It is therefore absurd that in Uganda our research and knowledge base is heavily reliant on foreign research and innovation even though we have a wealth of well trained people. It is therefore imperative that Makerere University and government see themselves as strategic partners with huge opportunities that would be mutually beneficial.

Makerere University has continued to play a leading role in Higher Education in Africa. This role is recognized globally and by the African Union and its bodies such as the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA), Association of African Universities (AAU), and sub-regional bodies such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). These bodies recognize the urgency to build a critical human resource for the continent, especially to strengthen value chains in Agriculture to support economic development in the continent. I informed that In this regard, Makerere University on behalf of 25 Universities in Africa, will in November this year host an Africa wide Ministerial Conference on Higher Education in Africa, aimed at mobilizing international and African government policy support especially to Agricultural tertiary education. Prior to this, in September 2010, Makerere University will host an International Conference on building scientific and technology capacity to support agriculture and rural development. This conference will bring together over 250 young research scientists and development practitioners across the continent. Such events are illustrative of the important contribution Makerere has made.

Allow me add however, that the government should step up and play its role in providing the necessary financial resources to enable our universities play a more meaningful role in our nation's development. The level of investment in strategic research and innovation is woeful and should be given a lot of thought. Because we are not investing in research, the research agenda at our universities is determined elsewhere. Most of the research being done at

Makerere if funded by foreign donors. This does not auger well for us and needs to be addressed.

We need a radical and holistic rethink of our education policies and priorities as well as a clearer definition of the role of universities in the overall national development frameworks. I would like to appeal to the government to re-think its funding regime to higher education if we are to realise the partnerships that we so desire.

At the same time, as public institutions, we need to learn to be more accountable to our publics to ensure that we deliver on our promises. It is not enough to demand for more money from the taxpayer if we are not ready to account to them. I am therefore pleased to hear of the administrative and financial reforms aimed at improving our public accountability.

As I close, let me return to our graduands. While I have already congratulated you on your success, let me add that the public's expectations of you are very high. Your parents, guardians and sponsors have invested a lot in your education and expect returns on their investment. They expect you to mature into productive people, independent and self driven. Steer clear of actions and behaviour that will derail you and ruin your future. While the wider public expects quality professional services from you we your Alma matter expect you to be active in the development of your institution.

As you leave the gates of Makerere take time to reflect on the advice you have been given today and before today. Think seriously about what sort of person, professional, and citizen you would like to be. Go in peace; celebrate responsibly as you prepare to join the professional world.

I thank you.

As 'We Build for the Future'