

MAKERERE



UNIVERSITY

ADDRESS BY THE CHANCELLOR

Professor Ezra Suruma

On The Occasion of the 71st Graduation Ceremony of Makerere University

Tuesday 18th May 2021

- **Honorable Ministers**
- **Honorable Members of Parliament**
- **Members of the Diplomatic Corps**
- **Your Lordships the Judges of the Judicature**
- **Religious Leaders**
- **The Leadership of Kampala Capital City Authority**
- **Representatives of Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies**
- **Chancellors and former Chancellors**
- **Chairperson of Makerere University Council**
- **Members of Makerere University Council**
- **Vice-Chancellor Makerere University**
- **Former Vice Chancellors**
- **Members of the University Management Team**
- **Former University Management Staff**
- **Vice Chancellors, Rectors and Principals of other Universities and Institutions**
- **Members of the University Senate**
- **Members of Staff of Makerere University**
- **Parents and Guardians**
- **Graduands**
- **The Media Fraternity**
- **Distinguished Visitors**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

1. It is a great pleasure and privilege to welcome you all to the second day of Makerere University's 71st Graduation Ceremony. I congratulate the graduands, the parents, guardians as well as all faculty, staff and management of Makerere University for reaching this wonderful occasion.
2. We are all survivors of 2020, a year unlike any other in the history of mankind. In the past 15 months much of the world has had to shut down because of Corvid19. Schools were closed, airline schedules were

overhauled, hospitals were overwhelmed and too many lives were lost and are still being lost in many countries. We who are still alive today should surely thank God for His divine mercy upon us. I truly congratulate you upon your survival and graduation in spite of all these trying times.

3. Today we are awarding degrees to students in the **College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the College of Education and External Studies**. I wish to thank the faculty and staff of these colleges for the excellent work they have done to prepare the students who are graduating today. Thank you very much. I am confident that these graduates will have a transformative impact on the future of Uganda.
4. A recent post on social media suggested that we should stop saying that agriculture is the backbone of our economy. Rather we should say that agriculture is the oxygen of our economy. While I do not usually quote social media, I found a grain of truth in that dramatization of the critical role of agriculture in Uganda and many other economies. In short, it is indispensable to our survival. A great deal remains to be done to improve agricultural productivity and marketing. The parish model which is now being popularized aims to increase agricultural productivity throughout the country and to improve the overall management of the agricultural, infrastructural and financial sectors at the grass root level.
5. I believe that this model offers us all opportunities to simplify and understand the processes of economic development by making it tangible at the parish level. As the saying goes, this is where the rubber meets the road. This is the proving ground for development and growth theories. I pray that the students and researchers in agriculture, education, financial services, agricultural processing, storage and infrastructure will come alive and take advantage of this opportunity to rescue our economy from poverty and stagnation. The challenge is to you and me to go to our parish, our roots and make a difference. If you don't do it on the pretext that you are waiting for donors or even government to do it, you are simply condoning stagnation and postponing the opportunity to transform our people from rags to riches.
6. As for education, it will certainly always be at the center of human progress. From Universal Primary Education to University, the struggle to define knowledge, to select what to teach and how best to teach it will remain vital matters that define who we are and what we shall become. The

spread of new technologies are continuing to critically influence what we teach and how we teach it. The digital revolution has altered what it means to know. Memorizing dates and facts and figures that can be accessed in seconds on a digital device may not be as impressive or necessary as it used to be before we had smart phones in hand. Education must strengthen our capacity to compete and to survive and not just make us photocopies of what is in books.

7. We know for sure that we are competing with other nations and regions for survival. We are competing for better productivity in agriculture, in medicine, in nutrition, in trade and in the race for knowledge generally. The more our people access and apply critical knowledge the better off we are and the safer we are. Makerere University's leadership in research and knowledge dissemination makes it a strategic center in the present and future of Uganda.
8. Looking towards the future, it is imperative that we move in the right direction. It is imperative that we remain steadfast and committed to hard work and moral integrity no matter how tough the going gets. At some point, our progress may appear to be slower than our peers but we should not be moved or discouraged. Remember that God has a purpose for your life and my life. He will ensure that we achieve that purpose notwithstanding the pain and suffering we encounter along the way. Weeping may endure for the night but joy comes in the morning. So hold on my child, joy comes in the morning.
9. We are all in this world together and we need each other's support and encouragement. Please be that support. Be that encouragement. Be the one that offers a helping hand rather than the one who kicks the feeble and the needy. Be the one that takes a stand for what is right. As the writer of the letter to the Hebrews put it:

*"Take a new grip with your tired hands
And stand firm on your shaky legs,
And mark out a straight, smooth path for your feet
So that those who are following you though weak and lame
Will not fall and hurt themselves but become strong."
(Hebrews 12:12)*

Wherever God puts you, may you be the candle that lights the darkness and

shows the way to those who are weak and in despair.

10. And may the good Lord grant you a bright future and a peaceful and prosperous life.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY.