

MAKERERE



UNIVERSITY

ADDRESS BY THE CHANCELLOR

Professor Ezra Suruma

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

Thursday 20th 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 my great pleasure and privilege to welcome you all to the fourth 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 auspicious occasion. Thank you all very much for a job well done.
2. Today we are conferring degrees and awarding diplomas to students from **Makerere University Business School. I wish to thank the faculty and staff of the School for the excellent work you have done to prepare the students who are graduating today. Thank you very much. I am confident**

that these graduates have acquired great knowledge and life skills that will enable them to thrive in their professional careers and to contribute enormously to the prosperity of our country.

3. Additionally, I commend the leadership of MUBS for the various training programs which they conducted both virtually and in various physical settings aimed at mentoring the graduates in leadership, creativity, entrepreneurship and in building both public and private enterprise.
4. Uganda's history over the past 60 years has been marked by economic and political fluctuations. In economics we refer to economic fluctuations as business cycles. We have seen periods of relative prosperity followed by widespread deterioration in economic wellbeing. Politically we have had times of peace as well as times of instability and war. For example, when I first returned from the United States in 1973 to take up a position as a lecturer at Makerere University, Uganda was under severe political and economic stress.
5. The situation continued to deteriorate until the war of 1979 when Tanzania invaded Uganda and President Idi Amin was forced to flee. Since then Uganda has continued to face important social, political and economic challenges. Consequently, as we look at our history it is easy to be discouraged. I personally was forced into exile both during the 1970s and 1980s. However, we must not be discouraged. We must rise up to resolve both the endogenous and exogenous challenges that often come, so that we persevere to build a more peaceful and a more prosperous Uganda.
6. To quote Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "We must not wallow in despair." Indeed, one of my favorite quotations in the Old Testament is a prayer by Jacob in which he says: "Lord, save me from the hand of my brother..." Uganda is a land of many tribes, religions and cultures. As with other African countries the Europeans used their power to pronounce that these various tribes and cultures would become one nation. And they took us to the United Nations and introduced us there as one nation. The challenge has now been handed over to us to live together in love and in peace.
7. When Jacob prayed to God to save him from his brother Esau, the latter had mobilized a battalion of fighting men to meet his brother Jacob who was returning home from 20 years of exile. God heard Jacob's prayer to "save me from the hand of my brother."

8. My brothers and sisters, history has put us here together. Actually, God has put us here. God actually put us here before the white man came. We were already here as neighboring tribes and religions. Then as now our people yearned for peace and prosperity. They yearned for love and abundant crops and livestock and children. Today we yearn for the same for ourselves, for our children and for our neighbors.
9. Today I want to light a candle of hope. When Jacob prayed to God to save him from the hand of his brother who was coming to destroy his wives and children, God answered that prayer. God performed one of the most remarkable reconciliations in history. The troops stood aside and watched as the brothers who had prepared for war instead fell into each other's arms and shed tears of joy.
10. The message I have for us today is: do not wallow in despair. God is powerful. Very powerful. He is able to reconcile us. He is able to transform the hands of war into the hands of peace. He is able to bring light where there is darkness. He is able to bring joy where there is bitterness. He is able to turn a heart of stone into a heart of flesh. He is able and He will turn Uganda into a land of love, a land of freedom and a land of prosperity. And you and I will be the instruments that He will use to transform Uganda into a great brotherhood.
11. So take your degree, take your faith and take your candle. Go and light your world. Go and work for God and for your country. The God who created you and who has brought you this far has a plan and a purpose for your life. No power of hell, no scheme of man and no circumstances can change that purpose or alter your destiny. Suffering will be there but God will be by your side to take you through it.
12. Permit me to thank our Music, Dance and Drama performers. They have been a source of joy and beautiful emotion throughout these graduation ceremonies. On Tuesday they brought tears of joy to my eyes when they sang: "*Carry your candle into the darkness and go light your world.*" A candle may be small in size but when it is taken where there is darkness it brings amazing relief and hope. So do not underestimate the power you have to bring hope and joy wherever you find yourself, wherever God sends you. Together, our candles will grow into a powerful flame that will transform Uganda forever.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR LISTENING TO ME.