

ADDRESS BY THE CHANCELLOR

Professor Ezra Suruma

On The Occasion of the 73rd Graduation Ceremony of Makerere University

Monday 13th February 2023

- **Mama Janet Kataaha Museveni, The First Lady and Honorable Minister of Education and Sports**
- **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**
- **Mrs. Lorna Magara, Chairperson of Makerere University Council**
- **Members of Makerere University Council**
- **Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe, Vice-Chancellor Makerere University**
- **The Vice-Chancellor of the University of London**
- **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 Guests**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen:**

1. It is with great joy and happiness that I welcome you all to this Freedom Square to celebrate Makerere University's 73rd Graduation Ceremony. I am delighted to congratulate all of you who have successfully completed your respective programmes of study and research. One of my favorite quotations is from the Gospel of John chapter 17. Jesus is praying to God and He says:

“I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do.” (John17:4)NIV. This implies that finishing the task God has given us to do brings glory to God and to us. So by accomplishing what brought you to Makerere University you have brought glory to God, to your parents, to your supporters and to your country. May I therefore request the whole congregation to give you a standing ovation in recognition of what you have done. Well done! Well done! Well done!

2. Today, we are privileged to have with us our Honorable Mama Janet Museveni the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports. We are truly honored to have you Mama at this 73rd Graduation Ceremony. We appreciate your strong and unwavering support for Makerere University. At a time when the national budget is very tight you have ensured that Makerere University continues to receive the financial support it needs to maintain and even surpass its record of excellence in education and research. We appreciate you for being exemplary as a mother, a guardian and a true champion of morality in Uganda’s education sector. Together with His Excellency President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni you have persistently supported Makerere University in particular and the Education Sector in general. We thank you very much for taking the time to celebrate Makerere University’s 73rd Graduation Ceremony with us.
3. Permit me also to say a special welcome to Professor Wendy Thomson CBE, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London who is here with us at this graduation ceremony. As most of you are aware, “Makerere University was affiliated to the University of London from 1949 until 1963 when Makerere became one of the three constituent colleges of the University of East Africa and later became an independent University in 1970 by an Act of Parliament.” So for 15 years (1949-1963) the degrees which Makerere conferred were University of London degrees. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that the University of London was the mother of Makerere University. Consequently, the visit of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London soon after we marked 100 years of Makerere’s existence is a most welcome visit.
4. It is also noteworthy that in **1948** Lillian Penson (BBK, QMUL, RHUL, UCL) was appointed as the first woman Vice-Chancellor of the University of

London and Makerere was affiliated to the University of London in 1949 when the first lady Vice chancellor had just come in. I hope that the advent of another lady Vice-Chancellor to Makerere at 100 years will again mark a historic future relationship with the University of London.

5. Today's graduation ceremony celebrates graduands in **the College of Health Sciences; the College of Natural Sciences and the School of Law. All these are critically important disciplines. I therefore wish to recognize the efforts of the staff and faculty of these colleges and thank them very much for the excellent work they have done to prepare** the students who are graduating today. Despite the severe challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic to both staff and students, they persevered and today marks your successful victory over all these challenges. The university leadership and teachers as well as the graduands deserve our gratitude for a job very well done. Thank you all very much and please keep up the good work.
6. In the same vein, I congratulate the parents, guardians and sponsors who have undoubtedly borne their full share of the pandemic while struggling to support you financially and emotionally. There is no doubt that they have had to make painful adjustments and sacrifices to enable our students complete their programmes. I thank them and I also congratulate them upon their vital role in supporting and steering our graduands to the success we mark today.
7. I also wish to thank the University Council, under the Chairmanship of Mrs. Lorna Magara, for the excellent work they have done by putting in place the right policies and controls to guide and steer this great institution. I also thank the University Management under the leadership of Professor Nawangwe for ensuring that these policies are successfully implemented. I congratulate both Mrs. Magara and Professor Nawangwe upon the renewal of their contracts for a second term in recognition of their excellent performance in their first term. I am most grateful to the Honorable Minister of Education and Sports for her full support and concurrence to the renewal of their contracts. I am very optimistic that Makerere University will continue to be a leading institution in education and research nationally, regionally and globally. I am confident that you will each build upon the success of your previous terms to propel Makerere University to unprecedented excellence in education, innovation and research.

8. Finally, a personal word to the graduands. Together we face a future that none can foresee or foretell. Only God knows what will happen to us individually, nationally and globally. In my case I went to university in the 1960s at a time when Ugandans had great optimism as a country following the attainment of Independence in 1962. However, by the time I was completing my graduate work in the early 1970s, General Amin had overthrown the Independence government and life had become extremely uncertain. Many people died including Theresa Nanziri who was a warden here in Africa Hall and Archbishop Janan Luwum in 1977. I was lucky to escape in 1975. I returned to Makerere as a senior lecturer in 1979 after Amin was removed by Tanzanian and other Ugandan forces.
9. The situation was not good politically so in 1980 I resolved to join politics even though I was an academic economist. Before long I had to flee again into exile after I narrowly escaped death in Mitchell Hall here at Makerere University. I stayed in exile for six years teaching in the USA. I returned in 1987 and joined government. I was fired in 1996 when I opposed the sale of Uganda Commercial Bank by government to foreigners. In 1998 the president called me back to government and in 2005 I was made minister of finance. I left in 2009 and in 2010 I became a distinguished fellow at the Brookings Institute a leading think tank in the world located in Washington D.C. In 2016 I was appointed Chancellor of Makerere University and I was also the Head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit. Among other things we spearheaded the expansion of coffee production and I read in the New Vision last Wednesday (9 February, 2023) that Uganda's coffee exports have gone from a 50 year average of 3.5 million bags per annum (1960-2010) to 9.67 million bags now – almost 10 million bags.
10. What am I trying to tell you? I am trying to encourage you to have hope even in the midst of affliction. Have hope. The uncertainty is there and it is real. Just as it was for me. Even the threat to life is real as we see in Ukraine and Turkey and Syria and Congo, to mention but a few.
11. Worry and anxiety come to all of us, although they don't improve anything. But faith and trust in God has worked miracles for me. I sincerely encourage you to trust in God. The God who has enabled you to survive covid and to complete your program here at Makerere is alive and real. I can testify that

through eight decades of danger and uncertainty God has always stood for me and with me. I have no doubt that what he did for me he can also do for you and for all who put their trust in him. In fact God recently spoke to me and said: ‘ever since you surrendered your life to me in 1960, I have been designing and guiding your life.’

12. At an appropriate time I request our Music Dance and Drama Team to perform a song for you which I hope will further encourage you to move forward with hope, with faith, with confidence and with thanksgiving. I hope you have the eyes to see what God has done for you. Because if you cannot see what God has done then his blessings have been wasted. Don’t be like the 10 lepers whom Jesus healed and only one came back to say thank you. I always beseech graduands and parents too, to cultivate an attitude of gratitude. May God grant you an attitude of gratitude and may He bless you all.