

# MAKERERE



# UNIVERSITY

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**SPEECH BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR, PROF. BARNABAS  
NAWANGWE AT THE 75<sup>TH</sup> GRADUATION CEREMONY  
ON 13<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025**

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- **Our Guest of Honour, The First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Hon. Janet Kataaha Museveni, represented by the Hon. Joyce Moriku Kaducu, Minister of State for Primary Education;**
- **The Chancellor of Makerere University, Dr. Crispus Kiyonga;**
- **Hon. Ministers;**
- **Members of the Judicature;**
- **Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**
- **Hon. Members of Parliament;**
- **Religious Leaders;**
- **The Chairperson of Makerere University Council, Mrs. Lorna Magara;**
- **Members of Council;**
- **Prof. Puleng LenkaBula, the Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Africa, our Commencement Speaker;**
- **My Colleagues the Vice Chancellors, Rectors and Principals of sister institutions;**
- **The Deputy Vice Chancellors, Principals of Colleges and Members of Management;**
- **Members of Senate;**
- **The Leadership of Kampala Capital City Authority;**
- **Members of Staff of Makerere University;**
- **The Guild President;**
- **Graduands;**
- **Parents, Guardians and Sponsors;**
- **The Media;**
- **Invited Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen!**

## **1. Welcome Remarks**

I warmly welcome you to the 75<sup>th</sup> graduation ceremony of Makerere University. In a special way, I welcome our Chief Guest, the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports who is represented by the Hon. Joyce Moriku. In the same vein, I welcome our special guest and commencement speaker, the Principal and Vice Chancellor of the University of South Africa, Prof. Puleng LenkaBula. I congratulate our graduands, parents, guardians and sponsors on reaching this important milestone.

## **2. Governance**

### **Appointment of a Chancellor**

Hon. Minister, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to congratulate Dr. Crispus Kiyonga on his appointment by H.E. The President as the eighth Chancellor of Makerere University. Dr. Kiyonga has had an illustrious career as a physician, politician and diplomat, and he has served Uganda diligently wherever assignments have placed him. Dr. Kiyonga, our proud alumnus comes to Makerere when we are undergoing a major transformation of moving to a more research-intensive and research-le university. His vast experience and expertise will, no doubt, be a major asset to this great institution. Dr. Kiyonga was installed as Chancellor of Makerere University by H.E. President Museveni on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024 here at the Freedom Square. This is Dr. Kiyonga's first graduation ceremony at Makerere University presided over by him. Congratulations, Mr. Chancellor, Sir.

### 3. Graduation Statistics

Mr. Chancellor Sir, during the course of the 75<sup>th</sup> graduation ceremony, I will present to you a total of **13,658** graduands who will receive degrees and diplomas of Makerere University. Of these, a total of **143** graduands will graduate with PhDs, **1,813** with Masters degrees, **11,454** with Bachelor's degrees and **243** with postgraduate diplomas. **53** % of the graduands are female and **47%** are male. **44%** of the PhD graduands are female. A total of **491** graduands will receive first class degrees. The best graduand from the sciences, graduating with a CGPA of 4.91 and a Bachelor of Science is Mr. Mubiru Enock Joel. The best graduand from the humanities, graduating with a Bachelor of Leisure and Hospitality Management, with a CGPA of 4.97 is Mr. Bagoole Abdul Latif Umar. **16%** of the graduands are graduating with post-graduate degrees and diplomas. We are making steady progress on our strategic journey of a research-led university. I congratulate all our graduands upon reaching this milestone. In a special way I also congratulate the members of staff, ministers, and members of parliament that are graduating today as well as children and spouses of members of staff and their parents or spouses. Today I will present to you graduands from the College of Education and External Studies, the College of Computing and Information Sciences, the College of Veterinary Medicine, Animal Resources and Bio-Security and the School of Law.

Allow me to highlight some of the achievements by these colleges.

#### i. College of Education and External Studies

- a. Under the guidance and support of The First Lady and Hon. Minister of Education and Sports, Maama Janet Kataaha Museveni, the College of Education and External Studies

through Makerere Institute of Teacher Education and Research (MITER) has undertaken a large-scale research project initiative focusing on the *implementation of a Competence-based “A” Level school Curriculum*.

- b. Unemployment, particularly among the youth, remains one of Uganda’s most pressing socio-economic challenges. The College of Education and External Studies has launched an impactful initiative The Mak-RIF project ‘*Student Training Entrepreneurial Promotion*’ which aims at equipping school teachers, students and slum school dropouts with entrepreneurial skills as part of its ongoing efforts to combat the growing challenge of unemployment in Uganda as well as support the implementation of the new Competence based lower secondary school curriculum
- c. The College has commenced the teaching of Early Childhood Learning at various academic levels – Diploma, Undergraduate, Masters, and PhD. This initiative is part of the College's broader strategy to enhance the quality of education in Uganda by addressing foundational learning needs and equipping professionals to meet the challenges of early childhood development.

## ii. College of Computing and Information Sciences

- a. Three undergraduate students from the College of Computing and Information Sciences (CoCIS) received the Africa 2024 Marketplace Simulation Award during the AFRICA2024 Conference in Alexandria, Egypt. Tusiime Agnes, Nampwera

Elisha, both fourth-year Software Engineering students, and Atuhaire Ronnie, a third-year Computer Science student, represented Makerere University admirably.

- b. The College of Computing and Information Sciences in collaboration with the School of Public Health received a grant funding worth **US\$ 1,500,000 (5.5bn/=)** from Google to support its Ocular project that is undertaking research on usage of Artificial Intelligence to enhance the diagnosis process of Malaria, Tuberculosis and Cervical Cancer in Uganda.
- c. Equally inspiring is the innovative work of our AI Health Lab, led by Dr. Rose Nakasi, which is transforming healthcare innovation. The effort uses artificial intelligence to address important health concerns in Uganda and beyond.

The AI Health Lab has produced a range of tools with support from partners such as Google, the National Institutes of Health, and the Lacuna Fund, including a 3D-printed phone-to-microscope adaptor and AI-powered diagnostic systems for malaria, tuberculosis, and cervical cancer screening. The work of the AI Health Lab exemplifies Makerere's dedication to leveraging science and technology to solve real-world problems.

- d. The AirQo Project, in collaboration with various partners launched the CLEAN-Air Africa Network on 5th April 2023 bringing together communities of practice from over fifteen cities in Africa, with a focus on utilizing low-cost sensors for air quality management in Africa.

### iii. College of Veterinary Medicine

- a. Researchers at CoVAB, in collaboration with the Uganda Virus Research Institute (UVRI) and supported by the Civilian Research and Development Foundation (CRDF) Global, are addressing the increasing threat of cyberattacks on laboratories handling high-risk biological materials. The initiative, *"Establishment of Cyber Biosecurity Inventory and Procedures for Effective Safety and Administrative Controls for COVAB and UVRI Laboratories in Uganda,"* aims to secure and protect these laboratory facilities. The project developed comprehensive Cybersecurity Standard Operating Procedures, guidelines, and manuals to ensure the safety of laboratories managing high-risk pathogens, which could pose significant national or global security risks if compromised.
- b. Based at COVAB, the Centre for Biosecurity and Global Health (CeBiGH) continues its efforts toward the development of recombinant vaccines and diagnostics, with major funding from the Science Technology and Innovations Office of the President (STI-OP). Cutting-edge scientific research laboratories with up to Biosafety Level 3 (BSL3) containment have been established. Using COVID-19 as the starting point, prototype prognostic (testing disease biomarkers) and screening tests have been developed in the form of lateral flow assays (Rapid diagnostic test formats). In addition, recombinant vaccine prototypes including the anti-tick vaccine, COVID-19, and East Coast Fever (an important tick-borne disease of cattle) have been developed. This research has been extended to other diseases for which

diagnostics/prognostics and vaccines are urgently needed.

- c. The molecular and computational biology research group led by Dr Muhanguzi Dennis at COVAB together with the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas (FORTH), Greece are leading a large consortium [7 sub-Saharan institutions] supported by the European Commission [Euro 6.131 million] to investigate the role of ticks as disease vectors, focusing on Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever.
- d. CoVAB is making a significant contribution to the efforts towards sustainable food systems in Uganda, especially in the face of climate change challenges. The college is implementing various interventions like the 'Innovation for Sustainability and Societal Relevance: Partnerships in Evidence-based Higher Education on Food Systems and Climate Change' [INSSPIRE]. This initiative aims to enhance evidence-based education in food systems and climate change by integrating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into university curricula. Through approaches like Real-Life Learning Labs designed to tackle relevant issues in agriculture, industry, and society, students are equipped with practical skills and problem-solving capabilities.
- e. The College has been supported by the Swiss Government in championing the elimination of Rabies in Uganda and the Region through the use of electronic surveillance. Rabies is a global challenge being a zoonotic disease affecting the entire world more so here in Africa where there is close interaction between the wild animals and the human population. Using a one health approach, the college with partners that include the

University of Zurich is working with graduate fellows and other stakeholders drawn from Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, and Uganda Wild life authority among many others.

#### **iv. School of Law**

The new School of Law Building was officially opened on 18th December, 2024 by the First Lady and Minister for Education and Sports, Hon. Janet Kataaha Museveni. The building, fully funded by the Government of Uganda to a tune UGX 7.3bn, is a three-storied structure with several state-of-the-art facilities including lecture theatres, tutorial and seminar rooms, a library, state-of-the-art Moot Court room, a cafeteria, lactation room and staff offices. This modern infrastructure is going to greatly enhance and provide a conducive teaching and learning environment for both staff and students. Needless to say, we also expect more research and publications from the staff of the School.

#### **4. Research, Innovation and Outreach**

Makerere University is on steady progress to transform into a research-led University. The Government of Uganda provides Makerere University with a Research and Innovation Fund to support cutting-edge solutions that contribute to Uganda's development. The initiative has to date funded 1,337 projects, including 1,251 new ideas and 86 projects focusing on priority issues of national importance jointly identified with stakeholders, like improving the Parish Development Model, improving E-Governance systems, Youth Employment, and building critical research support infrastructure. The Makerere University Research and Innovation Fund has



also supported 235 PhD researchers, filling a critical gap that was left with the end of funding from the Swedish Government. Of recent, Makerere University Research and Innovation Fund has expanded its work to include support to commercialization of research and innovations. This year, 15 projects with a commercializable product have been supported to take the products to the market, besides funding the operations of Makerere's new Innovation Hub. The fund has forged partnerships with government entities to increase research utilization in policy. Last year, the Fund developed a new Research and Innovation agenda based on wide consultation with stakeholders from government MDAs, civil society, and the private sector. It signed MoUs with the Ministry of Public Service and KCCA. Makerere University Research and Innovation Fund has also supported research capacity development in other public universities including Busitema, Soroti, Muni, and Kyambogo Universities. To date, at least 157 of 578 completed MakRIF projects have a tangible product ready to be integrated into the national economy. Such products include 1) a biogas-powered cold storage for perishable horticultural produce, 2) the lateral flow rapid diagnostic test to identify early and late-stage sleeping sickness in cattle, 3) an irrigation kit that automatically senses low moisture levels in the soil and provides the exact needed water amounts, 4) cattle feeds from agricultural waste that can be used during dry seasons, 5) a new food product (MAKSOY, soybean varieties), to mention but a few. MakRIF is at the forefront of national science exhibitions and is now mooting a strategy, in collaboration with UNDP, to develop a registration and tracking system for all innovations in Uganda.

### **Makerere University Innovation Hub**



With the support of the UNDP, Makerere University has established the Makerere University Innovation Pod (UniPod).

The Innovation Pod is a multi-disciplinary state-of-the-art marker space. During the past year the Pod achieved impactful results including: Incubation of 51 innovations, Training of 15 Commercialization project teams, Supporting 13 commercialization projects to access funding totaling UGX 531,502,158/=, Supporting 5 student-led startups that registered with URSB, Supporting a staff-owned start-up to register with the URSB.

The Pod hosted more than 300 secondary school students; and other visitors. Arrangements are underway to open the Pod to innovators from the public and other institutions.

## **5. Recognition of the Best Researchers and Teachers**

Today we will recognize the best researchers and teachers, who have been selected using criteria approved by the Senate. The best three researchers for 2025 selected from among the best per college according to their categories, as well as the best three overall evaluated teachers will receive certificates of recognition at this congregation today. The rest of the researchers and teachers who have been recognized will receive their certificates at a special ceremony of convocation.

## **6. A Word of Gratitude to Partners of Makerere University**

The success of our University would not have been possible without the support of Government and our development partners.

Mr. Chancellor, Sir, Hon. Minister, I am glad to announce that the Mastercard Foundation approved our application for the second phase of the Scholars Programme. In this phase, Makerere University will receive a

total of USD 45.3 million to support the training of 1,000 students from Africa, with special consideration for women, refugees and persons with disability. The grant will also support action research for policy development. Please join me to thank the Mastercard Foundation for this generous support. The last cohort of students under phase one of the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Programme will be graduating during this graduation ceremony.

I would like to thank the other stakeholders who are giving research grants and providing scholarships to enable bright, but economically disadvantaged students to attain education at Makerere. These include the European Union, NORAD, Sida, IDRC, KOICA, DAAD, NIH, CDC, USAID, Wellcome Trust, KfW, IUCEA, Ruforum, ARUA, the PLUS Alliance, WUN, AAUN, AAP, the Madhvani Foundation, the Government of Uganda through the Higher Education Students Financing Board, the Embassy of China, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, Government ministries, State House, and many others.

## **7. Student Welfare**

Makerere University prioritises student welfare. Apart from the programme of renovation of all student halls of residence, the University is also working with private hostel owners to ensure that they maintain the minimum standards of hygiene and security of the students who reside in them.

The University Council established the Student Work Scheme. The scheme enables students to access work opportunities at the campus and earn some money to support them with their financial needs. The scheme has so far supported 60 students, including 23 female students.

In order to improve the experience of campus life and alleviate the challenges faced by students with disability, the University Council has established a one-stop Disability Support Centre. This centre will enable students that are differently enabled to access university services more easily and in a conducive environment.

The Students' Guild has revived the Guild Dialogues, a series of public debates that are designed to equip students with intellectual management skills. During these dialogues, students and members of the public debate issues of national and global importance without reverting to violence. I congratulate the Guild President and his leadership team on this great initiative.

## **8. Staff Welfare**

We wish to thank the Government for availing the required resources to enable us to finally resolve the matter of salary inequality, where Makerere staff have been earning less than their counterparts at other public universities. Salary harmonization is now complete and members of staff should get harmonized salaries starting with the January salary.

The final payments for the in-house retirement benefits have been paid and we thank the Government for allocating the money to clear this debt. The matter of in-house retirement benefits is now closed.

## **9. Infrastructure Developments**

Mr. Chancellor Sir, Hon. Minister, 2024 was a very good year for infrastructure development at Makerere. For the first time in four years, the graduation procession started from our re-constructed Main Administration Building. We thank the Government of Uganda that provided all the

required funds for the restoration of this icon of higher education in our region. The reconstructed Main Administration Building was opened by H.E. President Yoweri Kaguta Tibuhabura Museveni and the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, the Hon. Janet Kataaha Museveni on 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2024. The First Lady returned to Makerere on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2024 to open the new building for the School of Law, the renovated Lumumba Hall and to lay the foundation stone for a new building to accommodate the School of Graduate Studies and research, which is donated by the Late Hasmukh Patel the former Chairman of Tororo Cement. The renovation of Mary Stuart is ongoing, as well as the extension of the building for the Institute of gender and Development Studies, and the construction of a new building for the School of Public Health.

## **10. Transcripts and Certificates**

Mr. Chancellor Sir, Hon. Minister, we have kept our promise to our students and I am happy to report that the transcripts for all the students graduating today are ready for collection from their respective colleges. We are also working on further improvement of our systems to enable us issue the certificates to our graduands in the shortest time possible.

## **11. A Word to the Graduands**

Finally, my message to the graduands. You have been wonderful students, displaying the highest standards of discipline and scholarship, and we are proud of you. You are all graduating with disciplines that are very much needed by society. We have equipped you with the knowledge and skills that will make you employable or to create your own businesses and employ others. Do not despair if you cannot find employment, instead reflect on the

immense opportunities around you and raise them as an entrepreneur. As you leave the gates of Makerere, I urge you to always be proud of your Alma Mater and be her good ambassadors wherever fate will place you. Go and put to good use the knowledge you have received from one of the best universities in the World to improve yourselves, your families, your communities, your Country and humanity. Put your trust in God and honour your parents and opportunities will be opened for you. Avoid diseases, especially corruption. And please, *Do not Forget the Gates of Makerere*. Remember that learning never ends, and Makerere's gates will always be open for those that seek more knowledge. I once again congratulate you upon achieving this milestone and pray that God will continue to bless and preserve you our graduands, parents, and sponsors.

## **12.The Commencement Speaker**

Finally, allow me to introduce our Commencement Speaker. Today, we are privileged and honoured to have in our midst the Vice Chancellor of the University of South Africa, Prof. Puleng LenkaBula, who has graciously agreed to deliver the commencement lecture. Prof. LenkaBula is the first female Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of South Africa (UNISA) in that institution's 148-year history and she has been at the helm of that institution since January 2021. Prior to this, Prof. LenkaBula was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in charge of Institutional Change, Student Affairs and Engaged Scholarship at the University of the Free State, and Dean of Student Affairs at the University of the Witwatersrand. She is a visiting scholar at universities in Botswana, Ghana, Sweden and at Columbia University in the USA. She is a trained Feminist Ethicist with a PhD in Social Ethics. Prof. LenkaBula is passionate about total intellectual emancipation of Africa and increasing Africa's contribution to global knowledge. Prof.



