

Speech by Prof. Francis W. O. Aduol, Vice-Chancellor, The Technical University of Kenya on the Occasion of the First Graduation Ceremony of the University, 18th December 2013

The Chancellor, Dr. Manu Chandaria;

**The Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
[Represented here by Prof. Collette Suda, Principal Secretary];**

The Chairman of the University Council, Prof George Eshiwani;

Members of Council;

Visiting Vice-Chancellor Colleagues;

Staff;

Graduands;

Parents and Guardians;

Students;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen!

This occasion marks a special moment in the life of this institution, not least of all because it is the first Graduation Ceremony of this institution as a fully fledged university. When the institution was elevated to a fully fledged university on 15th January this year, that point marked a junction at which the institution was considered finally mature to be an institution of higher learning in her own right. That moment was the culmination of a long journey that began in the 1950's as the Kenya Technical Institute and passed through the Kenya Polytechnic and the Kenya Polytechnic University College. Today we are celebrating the very rich history of this institution through its own Graduation ceremony as a free standing university.

Mr Chancellor Sir, Ladies and Gentlemen!

We have certainly come far as a university level institution. Looking back to where we started with this institution as a university college, I would like from the very outset to express my appreciation to all the staff of this institution who made it possible at all for us to be granted charter as a fully fledged university this year. The grant of Charter to this institution was only possible through the dedicated commitment of our staff and students. Through your efforts we were able to meet the very stringent requirements of the Commission of University Education on these very grounds on 15th January 2013. Many of you will recall that it was a memorable occasion at which our staff and students participated with much joy and enthusiasm.

I would also like to thank from the outset the two university college Councils that steered this institution in those early years. I would like to mention in particular our two Chairmen of Council, Prof Francis Gichaga who was the first Chairman of Council and then Architect Zebedee Bukania who took over from Prof Gichaga when Prof Gichaga got appointed to the position of Chancellor of Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology (JKUAT). I would like to point out that all that eventually culminated with our being granted that University Charter was started by Prof Gichaga and concluded by Architect Bukania. I do thank them for the good working relations with them that made it possible for us to pursue the objectives of the university college with much focus.

As a university college we operated under the tutelage of the University of Nairobi as a constituent college of the University. On behalf of the Technical University of Kenya I would like to extend special thanks to the University of Nairobi for this support, and in particular to the Vice-chancellor, Prof George Magoha. I would like to note with much appreciation the fact that the University of Nairobi Senate under the leadership of Prof Magoha was always very helpful to us as a university college.

The University of Nairobi Senate was able to approve practically all the syllabuses that we presented before them. Prof Magoha on his part was always ready to offer advice and assistance to the university college without trying to interfere in the running of the university college; we are most grateful for this understanding on the part of Prof Magoha.

Mr Chancellor, Sir, Ladies and Gentlemen!

When this institution was elevated to the status of a university college from the Kenya Polytechnic, it was understood that it would eventually be a technological university but of a different type. It was considered that there was a definite need in our education system for an institution that would truly seek to train those who would go out into the world of work equipped with not only the theoretical knowledge to enable them to be innovative and future oriented but also with practical skills that would enable them to fit into the world of work with least technical difficulties.

Secondly, the institution was required to maintain a lot of its character as a polytechnical institution within the framework of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). This in essence meant that the institution was expected to continue with its polytechnical programmes such as the Diploma in the various fields that it offered.

The persons trained at the Diploma level typically aimed to be technicians in their various professional and vocational fields. Thus the institution was expected to continue with the training of technicians even as it expanded its scope to offer education and training to other cadres of personnel.

Thirdly, the institution was required to offer opportunities for its various categories of graduates to take up further study with appropriate credits granted for prior learning. This in particular provided that those who qualified with certificates should be offered opportunities to proceed on to study for Diplomas; those with Diplomas should be able to proceed on to take on studies towards degrees; and those with degrees should have opportunities for postgraduate study.

In the last five years or so that the institution has operated as a university college, it has sought to realise these objectives in the best way it could. The institution has styled its curricula with the deliberate aim to meet these objectives. First, virtually all the Diploma programmes were retained and are still operational. There thus continues to be a strong compliment of Diploma students aiming to be technicians among the compliment of students registered in the institution. Secondly, degree programmes have been designed as to carry a careful balance between theory and practice and such that they allow for the incorporation of prior learning in the smoothest way possible. In all this however, the principal defining factor has been to produce graduates who would be able to fit into the world of work with minimum friction.

As a polytechnical university, the institution considers that its mandate covers the education and training across the spectrum of the technician, technologist, and the (full) professional. In seeking to produce useful and well rounded graduates, the university's curricula are designed to allow for the exposure of the student to appropriate components of practical, applied, and theoretical knowledge. Typically within this structure those pursuing the Diploma will receive more practical training than any other level, while those pursuing the full professional programmes would receive more theoretical education than any other level.

Mr Chancellor, Sir, ladies and Gentlemen!

Our vision 2030 aims at our country being a middle income economy by 2030. In other words, the country hopes to escape from the category of nations described as poor. However, as we work towards this we should remember that no country ever got out of poverty without a critical level of technological development.

As a people, if we hope to realise our vision of getting out of poverty, then we must aim to achieve a certain level of technological development that will give us the right momentum to move towards the middle income economy that we aspire. Where our country intends to go in terms of technological development is in fact a path that has been trodden by others.

Already in the first half of the nineteenth century, Europe realised that if they wanted to experience technological takeoff they had to begin by establishing institutions of serious technological education. Our country has already recognised this through the establishment of specialised technical universities through provisions in the Universities Act, 2012. Through this new provision in the Act the Government has further gone ahead and created three technical universities, namely Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, the Technical University of Mombasa, and the Technical University of Kenya. We consider this a strong move in the right direction by the Government.

As the Technical University of Kenya I would like to assure you that we have taken to heart our new status as specialised University that is expected to be in the forefront of technological development of this country. We constantly emphasise to our staff and students that whatever we do, we must always remember that our graduate must go out there prepared not only to think, but also to do. Our curricula put considerable emphasis on practical training, very much in the spirit of the Kenya Polytechnic of old, but one supported with a lot of education of the theoretical concepts around that which is to be worked on with hands. All our programmes have a dedicated session of industrial training, which a student must pass before they can graduate.

Mr Chancellor, Sir, ladies and Gentlemen!

Today we are graduating some 2,509 students. This group covers Certificate, Diploma and Degrees. While the numbers of students we graduated in the Certificate and Diploma categories have virtually remained the same as in 2009 when we admitted our first degree class, the number of degree graduates has increased tremendously. Today we are graduating some --- Degree students. In this category of Degree students is a unique class that requires special mention.

In January 2009, as the Kenya Polytechnic University College, we admitted some 128 students to study for the degree of Bachelor of Engineering in Electrical and Electronic Engineering. These are students who had taken their KCSE in 2005 and had been admitted to the Kenya Polytechnic University College in 2007 to pursue their degree programmes at the institution.

By the time they were being called to join the university they had stayed home for thirty-six months since taking their KCSE. Given that these students had already lost considerable time, the institution devised a strategy to accelerate their stay in the university but without compromising on standards. These students were able to complete their studies early this year and we are pleased to report that they are among our graduands today.

This group of students is of special significance to this institution for a number of reasons; (i) they are in the first batch of students graduating from the institution under its new status as a fully fledged university, (ii) they are the very first group of students graduating with a degree from the institution after having joined the institution directly from high school through the Joint Admissions Board (JAB), and (iii) they are the first group of students graduating with a professional degree from the institution.

We would like to assure our stakeholders and the general public that these students have gone through and engineering education as rigorous as can be found in any engineering school. Most importantly we would like to point out that the course of study has been run in the spirit of aiming to give the students as much practical exposure as possible, so that each of the students has had to cover at least thirty-six weeks of dedicated practical training, partly on campus and partly in industry.

To all our graduands today I extend to you our warmest congratulations. We trust that you will go out there to face the world confident that you got from this institution the best skills to give you a competitive edge in whatever vocation you have chosen to pursue. As a University we send you out there with the clear knowledge that we gave you the best we could offer. it is now up to you to make the best use of it. I congratulate you and wish you well!

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Francis W. O. Aduol

Vice-Chancellor,

The Technical University of Kenya

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