SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR PROF. P. NDIRANGU KIONI ON FRIDAY DECEMBER 17TH, 2021 DURING THE 11TH GRADUATION CEREMONY AT DEDAN KIMATHI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

1. **Acknowledgments**

- **Dr. Jane Nyakang'o, Ag. Chancellor and Chairman of the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology Council,**
- **Dr. Roselida Owuor, Representative of Principal Secretary State Department for University Education and Research,**
- **Members of the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology Council**
- **Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Dedan Kimathi University of Technology;**
- **Members of the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology Senate;**
- **The Alumni Association;**
- **Parents and guardians**
- **All our graduands**
- **Distinguished guests**
- **Ladies and gentlemen**

Good Morning?

1. Opening Remarks

I welcome you all to the 11th Commencement ceremony as we celebrate the graduating class of 2021. Graduation is a time in which we have the opportunity to not only celebrate our accomplishments, but to also reflect, listen to the lessons of others, and look to the future with hope. I want to extend my congratulations to the 897 students graduating today adding to the 1312 who graduated in May of this year to bring the total graduands for this year to 2209. Kudos for your unrelenting determination to forge forward and complete your studies even as the world was battling with this global pandemic. You have completed this important phase of your career development journey and now you are ready to embark on the next phase, where you get to practice and apply the knowledge that you have acquired.

2. **Why are we having a virtual graduation for the second time this year?**

Ladies and Gentlemen

This is the second graduation that is being held this year, following 10th graduation which was held in May where 1312 students graduated. This is as a response to the disrupted academic schedule that was occasioned by the COVID-19 global pandemic which saw some students complete their studies after the 10th Graduation that was held in April this year. The University saw it necessary to cater to this group's needs by holding a second graduation specifically for you. This will allow you to graduate and join the job market in good time.

3. **Resumption of Face to Face Learning**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to note that the University has fully reverted to face-to-face teaching. Once again, our students are able to benefit from face-to-face teaching and one-to-one academic consultations with their lecturers. For some time, the University had to migrate from in-person teaching to remote teaching, before students could report back on campus. Indeed, it has been extremely challenging for the university to discharge her mandate of teaching during that period of time.

4. Increasing Employability of our Graduates: Creating A Triple-Helix Environment

For the DeKUT to continue providing relevant education and ensuring that the graduates are employable and succeed in their careers, the University has to increasingly work with the industry and government; and deliberately create opportunities to expose students to the world of work. This year the University has made tremendous gains in, one, establishing partnerships with industries; two, creating centres in the University where staff students and the industry can work together to develop new products and solve problems of the industry, and three short-courses both for our students and people working in industry and government for technology transfer, expanding the range of academic programmes offering to cover niche areas. The goal is to enrich the study environment for our students in the University and also to create a vibrant R&D and Innovation ecosystem. In addition to enhancing the preparation of the DeKUT students for the world of work, a vibrant R&D and Innovation systems is critical to the success of the Dedan Kimathi Science and Technology Park.

(a) Programmes

The following programmes have been introduced following approval by the Commission for University education. M.Sc. Telecommunication Engineering, M.Sc. Biomedical Engineering, M.Sc. in Machine Tools Design and Manufacturing, M.Sc. in Civil Engineering. CUE also approved B.Sc. in Chemical Engineering, B.Sc. in Geology, Bachelor of Technology in Building Construction, and M.Sc. in Forensics and Security.

5. **Science and Technology Park**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The University has established a Science and Technology Park to encourage cooperation and synergy between universities, research institutions, government and the private sector to create a favorable environment for innovation, renovation, and training. DeST-Park covers three thematic areas, which are: Agri-tech (Food bio-resources and natural products value-addition), Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and Design, Materials and Manufacturing (DMM). So far, DeST-Park has attracted anchor clients; Snowcap Development Limited, Asytec, and Semiconductor Technologies Limited.

In April this year, the President of the Republic of Kenya, H. E. Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta, presided over the launch of Semiconductor Technologies Limited. The company, which is the only one of its kind in Africa, manufactures nanotechnology products such as integrated circuits and sensors used in electronic gadgets for the global market. Its products have a high demand and are used in electronic gadgets such as mobile phones, televisions, and laptop computers. The establishment of Semiconductor Technologies Limited (STL) in the University is a major milestone in the development of Dedan Kimathi Science &Technology Park (DeST-Park). STL will provide the Science and Technology Park and the University with crucial local and international linkages contributing to intellectual property outputs. Construction of the Design, Materials and Manufacturing Hub (DMM) is ongoing.

The University has also established seventeen (19) specialized research and innovation centres to support the Science and Technology Park. We now have, among others,

(a) The following three centres have been established to support the manufacturing theme of the park and to work closely with the Semiconductor Limited – the STP flagship partner.

✔ Centre for Development of Electronic Devices that engineers designs circuits for various electronic devices depending on functionalities specified.

✔ Centre for Nano-materials and Nanoscience Research that creates capacity for research and development in thin film deposition, nanofabrication, and characterization.

✔ Centre for Polymers and Mold Designs to support the development plastic engineering and polymer technology required in the manufacturing of electronic devises

(b) For the Digital Theme of the park we have

✔ Centre for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence that develops diagnostics tools for medical imaging, develops systems for natural ecosystems and water resources monitoring and also develops sensor systems and mobile applications for precision farming.

✔ Centre of Geospatial Information Systems and Remote Sensing

These centres already have projects with industry and government institutions. They have projects supported by Kenya Space Agency; Safaricom Limited; Google; electronics giant ARM among others.

✔ DeKUT/KFC Film, Gaming and Animation Hub that builds local capacity in animation, game development and film production in readiness for the establishment of a digital media city within the park. Over 30 graduate interns have benefitted from training on film making, animation and gaming the last one year.

✔ Software Development Centre that provides local software solutions.

(c) Support Centres

✔ The Start-Up Centre that promotes the development of prototypes and the establishment of spin-off companies and enterprises.

✔ Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Management that offers mentorship support and entrepreneurship training to innovators and startup companies.

The Start-Up centre and the Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship Management has been established after a successful conclusion of a three-year project of "Developing Entrepreneurial Universities in Kenya, DePUK, that was funded by DAAD, and jointly undertaken by Dedan Kimathi University of Technology Chuka University and

Karatina University. The focus of the DePUK was to capacity build academic staff of the three Universities to be able to mainstream entrepreneurship in university education, using the experience of University of Saarland, Germany.

The University, in recognition of the continuing development of the Dedan Kimathi Science and Technology Park, has also been admitted into the membership of the International Association of Science and Technology Parks.

The initiative will support students and staff to become entrepreneurs and job creators and stimulate economic development in the region.

6. **Strategic Alliances**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the years, the University has formed strategic alliances and collaborations with various like-minded organizations to ensure that we empower our graduates with superior skills and the requisite mindset that they need to deal with the challenges they face.

The University has also signed various MOUs agreements with several organizations/institutions. To list but a few we have an MOU with the center for International Migration, the Africa Bio-Energy Programme Limited (AFBL) and Biogas Kenya with who with have partnered with to set up a center of excellence in biomass energy under the Center for Biomass Energy Studies (CBES). The University and the Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) recently signed a grant agreement for the Green Climate Fund (GCF) project which is being implemented by the DeKUT Centre for Biomass Energy Studies.

7. Establishment of the UNESCO Futures Literacy Chair

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have also signed an agreement with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to establish a UNESCO Chair on Anticipatory Socio-Technical Systems at the University.

This is a major milestone in the University as it will enhance an integrated system of research, training, information, and community management to study anticipatory socio-technical systems. It will also engage in research, teaching, and community engagement that enhances future literacy capacities and the integration of the discipline of anticipation to support the development of a resilient and sustainable Africa. Specifically, the chair will disseminate the knowledge and methods of understanding anticipatory systems and processes used to imagine futures, advance future studies, and enhance societal resilience by cultivating conditions for a capability-based approach to well-being and sustainability.

8. N**ewly created departments to support students**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The University has established the office of career services which geared towards helping students explore and develop their careers through Industry linkages and mentorship programs. The office will also support alumni by continuously engaging them and helping them secure employment where possible. The University has also established the office of Financial Aid Office (DeFAO), which also has a robust work-study program that allows students to work while studying within the University to earn an income and learn from various departments and offices.

9. **To our graduands,**

The world is competitive and tough; as a university, we have given you the best skills and equipped you with the tools to take it on. Be good ambassadors of the university; carry yourself with dignity, discipline, and hard work as you build strong careers to build the nation.

Once again congratulations to the class of 2021.