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SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR PROF. P. NDIRAGU KIONI ON THURSDAY AND FRIDAY MAY 26TH & 27TH, 2021 DURING THE 12TH GRADUATION CEREMONY AT DEDAN KIMATHI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, FREEDOM HALL

1. **Acknowledgments**

- The Chief Guest, Prof. George Magoha CBS, Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education;
- Ag. Chancellor and Chairman of the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology Council, Dr. Jane Nyakang'o;
- Members of the Dedan Kimathi council;
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Dedan Kimathi University of Technology;
- Members of the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology Senate;
- Distinguished guests;
- The Alumni Association;
- Parents guardians;
- All our graduands;
- Ladies and gentlemen;

Good morning and welcome to the 12th Graduation Ceremony.

1. Opening Remarks

Let me take this opportunity to first congratulate the 903 students graduating here today. This is an increase from the 897 who graduated in December last year. We recognize your efforts, your dedication, and your sacrifice. We celebrate your exemplary achievements today, as you receive your awards from this esteemed institution. You have remained focused and true to your ambition as illustrated by your arrival to this stage of the academic ladder. The knowledge and skills you have acquired have prepared you to meet the challenges of life outside this institution. Most importantly, this knowledge should prepare you to serve your country diligently and responsibly as good citizens.

2. First In-person Graduation Since the Beginning of the Pandemic

Ladies and Gentlemen

This marks the first in-person graduation ceremony the University has held since the beginning of the pandemic in 2020. We are all aware that the COVID-19 pandemic came with many challenges to the education sector as a whole. Academic programs were adversely affected necessitating us to shift from in-person teaching to e-learning. In this regard, I wish to applaud the University management and staff for ensuring continuity of learning during the turbulent period. It is this dedication that enabled the graduands to complete their studies on time leading up to this graduation.

3. Reflecting on the positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The COVID-19 pandemic awakened our innovation potential seeing the University venture into the development of ventilator machines, hazmat suits and other innovations meant to assist the nation to combat the pandemic. The University has continued with the same streak, increasingly inculcating skills in innovation to our students who are the heartbeat of every innovation project that we undertake. In

this regard we recently celebrated the launch of the Industrial Scale Automated Maize Drier (ISAMD) which was an innovation partnership between the University, the laikipia County Government and Small and medium sized enterprises in Laikipia County. The event was graced by Prof. Magoha CBS, Cabinet Secretary for Education and H.E. Nderitu Muriithi, Governor of laikipia County. Through the maize drier project, the University is impacting the community by creating jobs, promoting best practice in post harvest management, increasing food safety and overall health of the people, transferring of skills to the SMEs and encouraging the growth of SMEs.

4. The Future of Work

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With the growth of the internet and new technologies, work and work environments are changing at a very rapid rate. Some roles are getting automated, and new careers have been established. The COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated the shift of work and this has led to more people working remotely. Digital platforms, and other innovations are also changing the fundamental nature of work.

In line with this, the University has put measures to promote online work through platforms such as the Ajira Digital Club, which operates under the Office of Career Services. This is a partnership between the Kenya Private Sector Alliance (KEPSA) and the Ministry of Information Communication Technology that aims to bridge the gap between skills demanded by offering training and mentorship to the youth.

5. Start up Ecosystem

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Through the Science and Technology Park, the University has created an ecosystem for the development and nurturing of start ups. DeST-Park encourages cooperation and synergy between universities, research institutions, the government and the private sector to create a favorable environment for innovation, renovation, and training. DeST-Park covers three thematic areas under which start ups are supported, they 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.

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

1. The following three centers have been established to support the manufacturing theme of the park and to work closely with Semiconductor Limited – the STP flagship partner.
    - Centre for Development of Electronic Devices that engineers design 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 of plastic engineering and polymer technology required in the manufacturing of electronic devices

2. 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 centers 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 filmmaking, animation, and gaming over 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.

6. Establishment of the UNESCO Chair

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.

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. This will enhance an integrated research, training, information, and community management system 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.

7. Staff Development

The University has continuously supported its staff members in a number of ways and this has led to a high number of staff acquiring their PhDs and more are in the process of acquiring them. With support from our international partners such as France and Hungary, we have been able to strengthen our postgraduate development by providing scholarships. Some of our staff members have also been recognized at regional and country levels for their outstanding performance in research and innovation. They include; Dr. Ciira Maina, Prof. Jean Bosco and Dr. Fredrick Madaraka.

8. To the graduands;

The University has equipped you with the best education to tackle any challenge that you encounter. Go forth with confidence and embrace the journey with courage and determination needed to last the course.

Congratulations to the class of 2022!