

SPEECH BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY STATE DEPARTMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, DR. BEATRICE MUGANDA INYANGALA, DURING THE 15TH GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON 15TH DECEMBER 2023 AT DEDAN KIMATHI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

- The Chancellor of DeKUT, General (Rtd) Dr. Julius Waweru Karangi EGH, CBS, DCO, LOM
- DeKUT Council Chairman, Dr. James Kariuki;
- Members of the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology Council;
- The Vice Chancellor, Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, Prof. Eng. Peter N. Muchiri;
- Other invited VCs and DVCs present
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor, DeKUT;
- Members of the DeKUT Senate;
- National and County Government officers present;
- Distinguished guests;
- Alumni Association;
- Parents and guardians;
- Graduands;
- Members of the Fourth Estate present
- Ladies and gentlemen;

Good morning

It is with great pleasure that I join you today on this momentous occasion of the 15th graduation ceremony of Dedan Kimathi University of Technology. I want to begin by congratulating all the graduates of this 15th DeKUT graduation ceremony. I join your parents and guardians in celebrating your achievement. I am happy to note that this institution's graduates are already making great contributions to the National economy through their various professions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I want to extend my warmest congratulations to General (Rtd) Dr. Julius Waweru Karangi EGH, CBS, DCO, LOM, on his recent appointment as Chancellor of DeKUT. It is a significant achievement and a testament to your exemplary leadership, dedication, and contributions to the Nation.

Your appointment comes at a crucial time for our Nation, where the role of higher education in shaping the future has never been more critical. I am fully confident in your ability to provide visionary leadership to DeKUT and guide the institution towards new heights of excellence. I wish you all the best in the new role as you serve the DeKUT fraternity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would also like to congratulate the newly appointed DeKUT Vice Chancellor, Prof. Eng. Peter Ng'ang'a Muchiri. His wealth of experience and commitment to academic innovation and community engagement make you the ideal candidate for this esteemed position. I am confident that DeKUT will continue to thrive under your leadership as a centre of learning, research, innovation and positive societal impact.

As the Vice Chancellor, you will undoubtedly face challenges and opportunities. However, your vision, coupled with your dedication to the advancement of education, will contribute to the success of DeKUT.

On behalf of the Ministry of Education, I extend our sincere congratulations once again. I look forward to witnessing your leadership's positive impact on DeKUT, its students, staff, and the broader community.

And please do not hesitate to reach out if there are ways in which the Ministry of Education can collaborate with DeKUT to further our shared goals of academic excellence and societal progress.

I wish you every success in your new role.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

This ceremony is truly the culmination of years of hard work by the Graduands in their respective disciplines. We are gathered here to celebrate our graduands on this special occasion in their lives. This significant achievement could not have been possible without the unwavering support and encouragement of parents, guardians, spouses, friends and sponsors whom I believe are taking pride in today's occasion. This graduation ceremony is clear evidence of the hard work and commitment of the lecturers and staff of this great university. I therefore take this opportunity to appreciate each one of you for the role you have played to have this day being a success. I am confident that this Graduating Class of 2023 is poised to create a positive impact in the lives of the people they are going to serve in Kenya and beyond.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

I am glad to inform you that the government has successfully implemented the new financing model for the 2022 KCSE candidates who have joined year one. In addition, the new funding model has enabled the classification of the students based on their funding requirements. This model has now enabled the University Funding Board to determine the funding level required for each student in terms of Scholarships and loans.

The successful implementation of the new funding model is an important step taken by the Government to provide a stable funding for the Universities. I urge the Universities to ensure quality education is provided to the students.

I commend Dedan Kimathi University of Technology for standing firm in its core mandate in the Technology field. I urge the University Senate and Management to avoid deviating from this mandate. I commend the University for its Commitment to finding innovative solutions and maintaining its focus on STEM programs, noting 92% of the courses undertaken at the University are STEM-based, with 75% of the students in STEM subjects. This is highly commendable and I urge you to continue in the same path.

Research is an integral part of society. It is through research that we can come up with solutions to societal challenges and come up with innovations to develop our economies. At DeKUT, they pride themselves in practicing applied research directed towards innovation and solving societal challenges.

I am glad to note that DeKUT has established a research and innovation ecosystem that nurtures innovation and entrepreneurship. The over 22 Financially Independent Centers (FICs) in DeKUT are involved in various research activities and industrial based projects, which have a great impact on the economy. These centers serve as centers of excellence in their specialized research areas and work to attract funding for technical research projects to solve African and even global challenges.

I urge you to fast-track the commercialization of the innovations already developed by the University. It is only through commercialization that research can make an impact in the economy, creates new job and wealth, for national development

Ladies and Gentlemen;

As Universities prepare to receive the first intake of the CBC students under the new curriculum in 2029, I am happy to learn that DeKUT's programmes are already designed to focus on skills and competency development, which is a key requirement in the world of work. I urge all the Universities to make adequate preparations by aligning their programs, retooling lecturers and reviewing assessment methods to align with the CBC methods

I am proud that the University recently won the Entrepreneurial University of the Year Award 2023 during the Commercialization and Entrepreneurial Institutions Leaders' Summit (CEIL). This makes DeKUT a national model for an entrepreneurial University.

This is attributed to the University's entrepreneurial ecosystem that fosters innovation and entrepreneurship. The University has established DeKUT incubation hub (DeHUB) and the DeKUT Startup Center, are good initiatives that provides students with incubation spaces for their innovations.

The Ministry of education is spearheading the development of the DeKUT Science and Technology Park (DeST-Park). The park is already bringing together the Industry, Academia, the Government, and Public Institutions to create an innovative ecosystem that allows startup companies to thrive. The Ministry is supporting the Design, Materials and Manufacturing (DMM) building whose construction is under way.

DeST-Park was established to intensify the application of science, technology and innovation through interplay among the Government, the Industry, the Academia and the Society. It will be realized by pursuing 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).

I have learnt with great excitement that DeKUT has partnered with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in the establishment of the Origin Lab. I wish to appreciate the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) for choosing to partner with the University to host this unique Lab, the Origin Research and Innovations Labs Physical Hub of East Africa. From the information we have, Origin Lab is designed to catalyze solutions for Africa's problems by Africans and Africans in the diaspora. The project is a melting pot for innovative and pioneering African ideas.

Indeed, this project speaks volumes to this University's entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem. The Origin labs also present an excellent opportunity for this University to be a hub for providing solutions to the challenges faced by Kenya, the region and even the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

The Ministry of Education recognizes the crucial role of university education and continues to support the growth of universities in infrastructural development, equipment acquisition, policy development and governance. Here at DeKUT two flagship projects stand out. First is the Dedan Kimathi University Comprehensive Cancer Management Centre; and second is the Dedan Kimathi Science and Technology Park.

The Ministry of Education is committed to providing the appropriate support and an enabling environment to enhance the potential of universities to grow into credible Institutions that produce highly skilled graduates for the job market locally and globally.

To the Graduands,

The fact that you are here graduating, is evidence that you have remained committed to purpose – the purpose that brought you here so you could acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes that

have made you a better citizen not just in Kenya, but to the entire globe as well. It remains to be seen whether you will live to this purpose, and contribute to solving the many challenges that face humanity.

Your journey that started some years ago culminates in this sacred academic undertaking. We all stand to witness this great success.

As I conclude, I urge you to be problem solvers, not problem creators; and where possible job creators. You must brace yourself up to be the one to provide the answers to the questions that continue to press our country, and indeed the world. Dedan Kimathi University of Technology has set you on the path to self-realization and service to humanity. That is a life-long journey that you have embarked on.

Embrace the journey with the courage and determination. Develop a moral compass to help you navigate your way, and do not be easily distracted by shortcuts that will curtail your progress. Be innovative, creative and entrepreneurial and always search and respond to all emerging opportunities.

Congratulations graduating class 2023 and God bless you ALL!