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SPEECH DELIVERED BY TOM OMOLLO ALANDO, INSTITUTE OF GEOMATICS, GIS AND REMOTE SENSING, DEDAN KIMATHI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, DURING THE 20TH GRADUATION CEREMONY HELD ON 12TH JUNE 2026, AT DEDAN KIMATHI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

The Acting Chancellor and Council Chairman, The Chief Guest, Members of the University Council, the Vice Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, The University Senate, University staff, parents, guardians and sponsors, fellow graduands, ladies and gentlemen; Good morning.

I am Tom Omollo Alando, a student from the Institute of Geomatics, GIS and Remote Sensing, and it is both a privilege and a humbling honor to stand before you today on behalf of the graduating class of 2026 to give the valedictory speech.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Today is more than a graduation ceremony. It is a celebration of years of hard work, sacrifice, resilience, friendship, and growth. It marks the end of one chapter and the beginning of another.

As we gather here, dressed in our graduation gowns and filled with excitement for the future, we are reminded that this moment is much bigger than any individual achievement. It is the culmination of years of sacrifice, determination, resilience, and countless memories that have shaped us into who we are today.

When we first walked through the gates of Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, we came from different counties, different schools, different backgrounds, and different

dreams. Some joined the School of Engineering, others the School of Science, the School of Business, the School of Computer Science and Information Technology, and many other programs represented here today, and of course, together with my classmates, I joined the Institute of Geomatics GIS and Remote Sensing.

What united us was a shared ambition: to learn, to grow, and to build a better future.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Our journey was not always easy. Along the way, we encountered obstacles. There were deadlines that seemed impossible, projects that tested our patience, presentations that kept us awake the entire night, and moments when technology chose the worst possible time to remind us that it was in charge. Many of us know the experience of spending hours working on an assignment only for a laptop to freeze moments before saving. Some of us submitted coursework with one minute to spare and celebrated as though we had won an Olympic medal. Others confidently walked into an examination room only to discover that the topic they had revised most thoroughly accounted for exactly one question.

For those of us in technical fields, there were also those unforgettable moments when software decided to crash after hours of work. In GIS, we could wait patiently for a raster analysis to process, only to realize we had forgotten one crucial step at the very beginning. The engineering students had their simulations, the computing students had their code, the business students had their reports, and somehow, we all shared the same experience of staring at a screen and asking, "Why is this happening to me today?"

Yet through every setback, every late night, every near deadline, and every moment of doubt when we wondered whether we would make it to this day, we persevered. And today, standing here together as graduates, I believe we can all agree that somehow, against all odds, and sometimes against our own time management, “we made it!

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Along the way, university became more than lecture halls and laboratories. It became a home. It was in these corridors that friendships were formed. It was in group discussions that strangers became teammates. It was in moments of struggle that we learned the true meaning of support and community.

Some of our best lessons came outside the classroom. For some of us, those memories were made on the sports field, where we learned discipline, teamwork, and resilience. We celebrated victories, endured defeats, "against KIBABII Uni in the national," and discovered that **success is never achieved alone.** For others, the memories were made in clubs, leadership activities, innovation challenges, community outreach programs, and student organizations that allowed us to grow beyond academics. And for a special group among us, some of our unforgettable memories were made high above the clouds on the slopes of Mount Kenya through the **Climb to Educate Program.**

For those who may not know, the Climb to Educate Program is one of DeKUT's most inspiring initiatives. Beyond conquering a mountain, the program promotes education, mentorship, resilience, environmental conservation, and the belief that young people can overcome challenges that may initially seem impossible. Year after year, the program has continued to transform lives under the passionate stewardship and support of our Vice Chancellor, who has remained its champion and a strong believer in the transformative power of education and adventure.

To my fellow Season 7 and Season 9 climbers, the memories of that journey will remain with us for a lifetime. We remember the early morning departures, the freezing winds, the steep trails that seemed endless, the exhaustion that tested both our physical and mental strength, and the encouragement we gave one another whenever the summit appeared out of reach.

That climb taught us a lesson that perfectly mirrors our university journey: every great achievement begins with a single step. The summit of Mount Kenya was not reached in a single leap, just as this graduation was not achieved in a single day. Both required persistence, sacrifice, teamwork, and belief in a goal greater than ourselves.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Of course, university life was not all work and no play. Many of us will fondly remember the countless debates that filled our free time. Some discussions were academic, while others were much more serious, such as deciding whether Chelsea, Arsenal, Manchester United, or Manchester City was the greatest football club. These debates rarely produced agreement, but they produced something even more valuable: laughter, friendship, and memories that we will carry long after today.

To our lecturers, supervisors, mentors, coaches, and members of staff, and a special mention to the entire IGGReS department, through the leadership of the Director, thank

you for your guidance, patience, and commitment to our growth. You challenged us to think critically, to ask questions, and to pursue excellence. The knowledge and values you have imparted will continue to guide us long after we leave this graduation square.

To our parents, guardians, families, and loved ones, words cannot adequately express our gratitude. You sacrificed your time, resources, comfort, and energy so that we could stand here today. And of course, we worked so hard as well not to disappoint you. **Galatians 6:9** tells us, '*And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up.*' Every achievement we celebrate today carries your fingerprints. This graduation belongs to you as much as it belongs to us.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Fellow graduates, as we leave Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, we enter a world filled with opportunities and challenges. The future will demand innovation, integrity, adaptability, and leadership. The journey is like a sailing ship that needs to remaining floating and to thrive by crusing on high seas – This is the spirit of resilience and sustainability in our future endeavors.

The degrees we receive today are not merely certificates. They are a responsibility.

A responsibility to use our knowledge to solve problems.

A responsibility to serve our communities.

A responsibility to create opportunities for others.

A responsibility to leave every place better than we found it.

The true measure of our success will not be found in the titles we hold or the positions we occupy, but in the impact, we make on the lives of others. As the Class of 2026, let us be courageous enough to dream big, disciplined enough to work hard, and humble enough to continue learning. Today we celebrate how far we have come. Tomorrow, we begin the journey toward how far we can go. Upon the VC releasing us back to our parents, community and the society, may we rise to every challenge, seize every opportunity, and continue making Dedan Kimathi University of Technology proud.

Congratulations, Class of 2026!

Thank you, and may God bless you all.