SPEECH DELIVERED BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR, PROF. NDIRANGU KIONI DURING THE 3RD GRADUATION CEREMONY OF DEDAN KIMATHI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY ON FRIDAY, MAY 29TH, 2015 AT THE GRADUATION SQUARE

Prof. Shellemiah O. Keya, DeKUT Chancellor
Cabinet Secretary for Education Representative
Chancellors and Vice Chancellors from other universities
Council Chairman, Prof. Dulacha G. Barako
Council Members
DeKUT Deputy Vice Chancellors
Deputy Vice Chancellors from other Universities
University Staff
Parents and Guardians
Graduands
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen
It is my great pleasure to welcome the graduands and their parents, guardians and sponsors to this graduation ceremony which is the third for this Institution since being chartered in December 2012. (Welcome to the Cabinet Secretary Representative from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology...) I would like to specially welcome our Chancellor, Prof. Shellemiah O. Keya, to this ceremony as he performs his duties of presiding over this congregation of conferment of degrees and award of diplomas and certificates.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, The University continues to operate on a growth trajectory with regard to programmes, number of students, facilities and quality of our graduates and research outputs.

Today’s congregation is for 1271 Graduands up from 782 last year. It is the first time that we have Bachelor’s degree graduands in Food Science and Technology, Sustainable Tourism and Hospitality Management, Purchasing and Supplies Management, Master of Science in GIS and a PhD in Food Science and Technology. These brings to thirty (30) the number of programmes with graduands at this function. Thus, the graduands at this ceremony are from eleven (11) certificate and Diploma programmes, fourteen (14) Bachelors, three (3) Masters, and two (2) PhD programmes.

This graduation also marks a major accomplishment in University Education: The completion of studies by students admitted four years ago under the Ministry of Education,
Science and Technology’s accelerated admissions programmes. In 2011, this university had two intakes for government sponsored students— one in May for students who sat their KCSE in 2009, and another in September for the 2010 KCSE candidates. We had to devise a suitable scheme to enable the teaching of the two groups and we are really delighted that both groups have now completed their studies. The many challenges which came up along the way in this undertaking were successfully resolved through the many contributions by staff, and cooperation of students. Here, I would like to specially thank the older students, those who were KCSE candidates in 2009, for accepting their younger brothers and sisters, holding their hands through the labyrinth of academia, in spite of referring to them as GMO – Genetically Modified Students. And also I would like congratulate the 2010 KCSE students for taking up the challenge, and adjusting and maturing extremely quickly in their first year of study so that today they are evenly represented in every degree classification. All in all, given that our academic year ends in December, we are pleased that going forward students admitted to this University shall henceforth graduate exactly, four or five years, depending on the degree programme, from the date of completing their KCSE examinations. It is good for the students and for the country.

As a university of technology we are keen on ensuring that our students meet, as far as possible, the requirements of the market. In this regard we continuously work to obtain and
maintain accreditation of our programmes by the relevant professional and statutory bodies, locally and internationally. We also encourage our students to prepare early for professional careers by taking keen interest in requirements of these bodies. In this regard, the School of Business Management and Economics obtained accreditation by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) for the Bachelor of Commerce – Accounting and Finance option. This means that graduates from this programme are exempted from a number of papers required for one to qualify for .... The Bachelor of Science in Nursing is accredited by the Nursing Council, of Kenya. Graduates can therefore be indexed upon graduation. Our coffee technology programmes are recognized by Coffee Directorate. Hence, the diploma holders are allowed to sit the professional examinations immediately upon graduation without any further training. Many of our actuarial students sit an impressive number of the actuarial papers of the Actuarial Society in London in, some up to five of the required twelve, as a preparation to becoming professional actuaries. Many other sit up to section Six of the CPA by the time they graduate. All these go a long way in preparing the students for the market and making them competitive. The Bachelor of Sustainable Tourism and Hospitality Management programme, which has graduands for the first time this year, was voted the best Eco-tourism Training Programme in 2014 in a contest sponsored by the AFEW. Such awards and
contests keep both the faculty and students tuned to the needs of the industry.

The University’s engineering programmes are under review by Engineers Board of Kenya for accreditation so that the graduates make the necessary preparations to be registered as Engineers. I am pleased to report that the board visited the University mid-this month in the final leg of the evaluation process. They had been satisfied with our curriculum, with our staff, and during the visit they expressed satisfaction with our facilities and the demonstration of our examination processes for the four programmes under consideration: Mechanical, Mechatronic, Civil, and Electrical and Electronic Engineering. We, therefore, expect that they will make an announcement shortly once they hold the next Board Meeting. We are informed that this will be in the next few days and certainly before the end of June 2015. With these arrangements, together with the special arrangements we have made for TIE students, these graduates have excellent opportunities to excel as engineering professionals.

This University lays great emphasis on innovation and entrepreneurship. In this regard we have experienced a rapid growth of students clubs involved in innovations and also an explosion of innovations and innovations expos from them. In response, the university took a practical step of supporting this by launching in March this year, the DeKUT IDEAS hub, the DeHUB. This is a place where students can
develop their concepts and are supported and incubated to create start ups or develop commercially viable products, mainly in ICT.

There has been a tremendous boost of our capacity to deliver quality academic programmes. Under the auspices of a Ministry of Science, Education and Technology programme, a project financed through a loan from the African Development Bank, the University received equipment to support Mechatronic, Mechanical, Civil, and Electrical and Electronics Engineering programme worth approximately, Kshs 350 million. Addition of this to previous investments in facilities means that the University, is very well equipped for engineering programmes, and it is in very good standing in this Eastern African Region. We are grateful to the government for facilitating this and for successful project implementation, and to AfDB for overseeing their support. As a university we shall leverage this support in our efforts to establish Dedan Kimathi University of Technology as a Premier Technological University in the region. We invite talented and brilliant young Kenyans to join the university and make use of these excellent investments, and faculty to prepare to impact on national development. This investment comes at a critical time when University’s engineering programmes are under review by Engineers Board of Kenya.

The University has also been contracted to train human resource in engineering and applied sciences area for Universities and Educational Institutions under an AfDB
financed programme. This covers three Masters programmes including Geothermal Energy Technology. This provides an opportunity for development of research capacity and closer collaboration with industry with whom these are being implemented. We have over fifty students enrolled in these programmes.

In this regard, the university won a grant from the USAID, for the GEOPOWER AFRICA, to conduct research on geothermal energy in the Rift Valley. This project is being implemented in partnership with four other universities in Tanzania, in Ethiopia and in USA.

The university plans to develop excellence in the research and training on renewable energy. Plans are at an advanced stage to establish a specialized institute for this purpose, and this is being done in collaboration with a network of local and international partners.

The University, through Institute of GIS and Remote Sensing, also won a grant from USAID to develop a Land Information System. This is being piloted for the Nyeri County and shall subsequently be rolled out to other counties.

This year the University was selected by UN to become the Regional Centre of Excellence on Education for Sustainable Development for Central Kenya region. This provides yet another opportunity for partnering with the communities in the region in a range of development initiatives with a view of empowering them with knowledge on how to use the
resources sustainably and to conserve for posterity. I note with appreciation that this University has a collaboration agreements tripartite programmes with Chuka University, and Meru University of Science and Technology, focusing on water and environment issues in the Mt. Kenya catchment areas, and jointly for which we jointly apply for research funding.

We have a long term collaboration, now running entering the 10th year, with the College of the Rockies, in British Columbia, Canada, with whom the department of nursing are implementing a five year project the Maternal Access and Infant Survival for Health Advancement (MAISHA) in two counties: Migori and Nyeri. The staff in the department of nursing has continued to enhance their skills through this collaboration, and further have trained many nursing professionals in the two counties. This training is already having a significant health impact in the health facilities where staff have received the MAISHA training. This programme is funded by Canadian DFAD (Formerly CIDA).

Since 2013, we have been collaborating with a University in Germany, the Technical University of Applied Sciences, Wildau, on developing and implementing a double Master degree programme in Mechanical Engineering, this collaboration got financial support from German, DAAD.

In the last one year the University has expanded in network of international partners so as to enhance the implementation of our unique programmes.
Character and Holistic Education

As managers of this institution we often tell our students of the founding fathers of this institution and their dream to create in this place an great Institution of Technology, which would play a role in Kenya such as that played by MIT an USA, an institution which would produce graduates with business and technological knowhow to transform Kenya, we identify with their visionary initiative to set the foundations, and reserve assets such as this land, for something which would only be realized far in the future, and not by themselves but by other people. This is a special week as we have on this dais, those founding fathers who dreamt of this. (an MIT here). Today, we have Mr. Duncan Ndegwa and Prof. Godfrey Muriuki; on Saturday, we had on this same place His Excellency, Mwai Kibaki, the immediate former President of the Republic of Kenya, who told us how this Institution should and would grow big. And we have had the luck to have had the previous service of Mr. Waibochi as KUCT Council Chairman. We also have the current generation of leaders, hereby ably represented by Senator Mutahi Kagwe and the Solicitor General Mr. Muturi, to whom the torch of actualizing these dreams has been passed, and who now have inherited and must bear the burning and altruistic desire to see that a great Institution (MIT) is realized, by working with the University to extend its reach in the society, and to ensure that the institution’s existence and development is rooted in the greater aspirations of the people and that it is effectively supported by them. At the other end we have,
the third generation, our graduands and students who live this dream (MIT dream) and shall use it, to transform the country and, ultimately, to significantly impact on mankind. We celebrate this meeting of three generations and look forward to hearing more of these aspirations a little later on.

However, given the profile of our guests today I would like to highlight a few ongoing initiatives by the DeKUT staff and students to nurture the University’s unique heritage as bequeathed by the founders.

This University, by its name, and the collaborative efforts of its foundation, is a great memorial to a rich history of this country, of Africa, and of black people. This history informs the University’s philosophy and is lived on a daily basis by her students and staff in many ways. Every year, since 2009, the University students and staff have marked the Kimathi week in the third week of February, to coincide with the 18th day of the month, when Dedan Kimathi was executed, by organizing activities, aimed at serving others and having public lectures by scholars and lately conferences for purposes of deepening our knowledge of Africa’s history and struggles for liberation. The first such lecture was given in 2009 by Prof. Macharia Munene, who is one of our guest today. This was followed by others so that by 2012, the Kimathi week had become a major event in the students’ Calendar. It was decided, therefore, that this aspect of the university’s history could be given a deeper meaning by establishing an educational centre which could serve as a
repository of material on liberation, enable scholarly work, organize conferences, develop the heroes garden as a memorial to the heritage, among others. This proposal was approved by the University council. Following this a standing committee was tasked with developing this centre. In 2014, the University organized the first Annual conference on Africa Liberation Movements with the second being held in 2015. Alongside this centre, the University planned to start a scholarship fund to support the academic pursuits of the centre and to also support brilliant students from financially challenged backgrounds.

The later aspect was developed further this year culminating in the launch of the Climbing Mount Kenya Cultural and Technological Expedition and the Climb to Educate Initiative under which an Endowment Fund aiming at raising 100 million was started. In this initiative, close to 284 students and staff scaled the heights of Mt. Kenya with 264 of them making it to the Lenana Peak. This expedition required a lot of preparations and provided excellent opportunities for meaningful interactions with the community, visit to many sites of historic importance in the county, training on leadership and teamwork. It also served as a great tool for National Cohesion and Integration of different groups, irrespective of religion, ethnic background, and academic disciplines. It also provided the university's staff and students with an opportunity to work out a way out of recurrence of disturbances and violence at the University.
In summary, the University is leveraging its heritage to provide the students with a unique cultural experience and holistic education. There is scope for partnerships for further development of such initiatives for the benefit of the University, the host community, and the country.

Beatification of Sister Irene Stephanie Nyaatha

In this regard also, it was a great honour to the University to host the beatification of the now Blessed Irene Stefanie “Nyaatha” and to have a commemorative plaque for this ceremony unveiled in the Heroes Garden by the Popes Delegate Cardinal Polycarp Pengo, of Dar es Salaam. We appreciate thank the Archibishop Rev. Peter Kairo, for this opportunity. The University identifies with Blessed Irene Stephanie’s heroic deeds at Gikondi and considers her a true heroine. The plaque will be a reminder to the University community of her heroic virtues.

In this regard we thank the National Government for erecting streetlights all the way from Nyeri Town and within the University and in the neighbourhood. This has immeasurably enhanced the security around the University.

County Government

In this regard we are grateful to the County commissioner and the security agencies for working closely with us on security issues and look forward to even greater cooperation as we strengthen our security systems.
This University works very closely with the Nyeri county government. There are many projects on which we are collaborating.

Hostel Providers

Mr. Chancellor, I would like to appreciate the role that is played by our immediate neighbors the Hostel providers. This partnership has continued to develop and to grow. The student accommodation capacity in the neighborhood of the university has grown significantly, and more importantly there has been a remarkable improvement in the quality of the services given. We are looking forward to having all our students accommodated in the immediate neighborhood of the University.

To the Graduands

For the students, you should remember that upon graduation you become a member of the Dedan Kimathi University of Technology Alumni Association. Congratulations.

Thanks

Today’s graduation is yet another great milestone in the history of this University. It has been achieved through the great cooperation of students, the commitment of staff, through the guidance of the University Council and support of the Ministry. We also have our co-trainers, the various hospitals, industries and business enterprises which support
us by opening their doors to our students and guiding them through the complex world of work. Most importantly, there are the parents and guardians who facilitate the students to be here.

We say a great thank you to you all.