

**ACCEPTANCE SPEECH ON THE OCCASION OF AWARD OF HONORARY  
DOCTORATE DEGREE IN HUMAN LETTERS (HONORIS CAUSA) BY  
DEDAN KIMATHI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY**

The Chancellor Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, Prof. S.O Keya  
Principal Secretary for Education Prof. Jacob Kaimenyi  
Vice Chancellor Dedan Kimathi University of Technology, Prof. P. N. Kioni  
Vice Chancellors of other Universities present  
Deputy Vice Chancellors  
Deans and Directors  
Registrars  
Teaching and non-teaching staff  
Parents and guardians  
Graduands and Students

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to be associated with this institution, particularly on this day when it holds its first graduation ceremony as a Chartered University. In this regard, I thank the Chancellor, the Council and the Senate of this University for inviting me here and for bestowing on me this Honorary Doctorate and therefore giving me another opportunity to continue my association and contribution to Dedan Kimathi University of Technology; only this time as an Alumnus.

It is very satisfying to see what has been achieved here over the life of this Institution since the idea of establishing it was conceived and concretized in the early 1970s. But it is equally important to know that this Institution is the outcome of people coming together and saying they are going to do something for themselves and for others and upon deciding what the goal is and what needs to be done committing themselves to that task until it is done. This is a project where the political leaders, the religious leaders, the government administration joined hands with the community, young and old, and each one involved contributing to the goal in whichever way they could. And the goal was to impart young people, upon attaining O-level education, with technical skills which would raise their employability and contribution to society as entrepreneurs. There are many people who made contributions of ideas, time, money, and other resources to the initiative. And it is with these contributions, big and small, that we raised enough money which enabled the Trustees to construct the first buildings, on the piece of land, neighbouring Kabiru-ini forest and which the county council allocated for this initiative.

In 1978, the Institution, the Kimathi Institute of Technology, was able to admit the first group of students into a few professional courses at the tertiary level. By this time, we had established some institutional structures to enable us undertake this work efficiently and effectively and to continue involving the community through their leaders. For this reason, I would like to thank all those who made contributions to this project, particularly those who served with me on the Board of Trustees, and also those who served as members of the Board of Governors at one time or another.

The project was undertaken in the spirit of self-reliance, and coming together of people to solve societal problems with a view to improving the general welfare of society, and this was the same spirit espoused in the national struggle for Kenya's independence, which was epitomized by the freedom fighter Dedan Kimathi. In the 1970s, a critical frontier for expansion of freedom was technological empowerment of the society. It was thus fitting to associate development of a technological institution with the struggle for a new kind of freedom, and, therefore, to name the Institution after a national hero and to link in it this same spirit: Focus on societal needs, self-reliance, and determination. The name bequeaths the Institution a liberation struggle heritage, and an African econo-social-cultural context. The name was received well across the board. There was not much debate about it.

However, even after establishing the Institution, the Vision was to do more and to create a bigger Institution for the young people so that they could be more empowered to make greater contributions to the society and the Country. It is this Vision which informed the decision to acquire the coffee farm, so that, even though the institution had started small, she could have enough land for development in future when the environment allowed upgrading of her educational mandate. Furthermore, it was envisaged that she should also generate some income so as to attain some level of self-sufficiency.

I am sure, that those who were involved in these early efforts, share my joy and satisfaction of the upgrading of Kimathi Institute of Technology, to Kimathi University College of Technology in 2007, and more recently, in 2012, the upgrading, by award of Charter, to Dedan Kimathi University of Technology. I therefore call upon those who have been entrusted with the leadership of this University, to steer it steadily towards realization of the vision of creating an enabling learning environment for our young people.

This institution was not an isolated initiative in Kenya. Since the 1960s we have been involved as leaders in many other educational initiatives all over the country.

And this is because all over Kenya people know the power of education and how it changes individuals, their families, villages and communities. It is for this reason that throughout the modern history of this country, families and communities have invested heavily in education. They view it as the means to escape poverty, to obtain gainful employment, to create wealth and to raise the standards of living, and to empower the next generation to lead a better life than themselves. And it is rightly so. The surest way to empower an individual is to give him education. First, education which enables him to take care of himself and to understand the society so as to fit properly in it, and secondly, education which empowers the individual to do useful work for himself and the society. When the individual is so empowered and they do useful work, they contribute to themselves and to the society, and consequently they benefit the society. Thus, education is the foundation of any development. It was for this reason that we decided in 2003 that every Kenyan child, including those who were financially disadvantaged, should have an opportunity to get an education, and hence introduced the Free Primary Education. It is also for the similar reasons that this was extended in 2008 to include Free Day Secondary Education, and that now basic education, as well as provision of some skills, is now guaranteed in the Constitution.

However, the world is changing very fast and the levels of education have gone up considerably across the globe. Thus, even as we celebrate what we have accomplished as a Nation, we must continuously raise the education and skills level of the people so as to be globally competitive, as individuals, as organizations, and as a country. It is for this reason that I am very pleased with what has been accomplished in the last few years, through the efforts of many people, in government and leadership positions, in the development of both University and tertiary education all over Kenya. Many new Universities have been established, and together with those which were started earlier on, have considerably expanded opportunities for our youth. Most important above all else, is for these ~~is that all these~~ Universities, and other educational institutions, to ~~must~~ grow and attain higher levels of excellence and match the best in the world. This way they will contribute to the economic development and improvement of the welfare of the people of Kenya, people in the region and in Africa.

I also note that there has been recognition of the contributions we have made in with regard to environmental conservation. It pleases me that in recognizing this, the University is also giving high regard to environmental conservation. As a country we cannot survive and meet the basic needs of our people if we do not take due care of our environment and it should be everyone's business to conserve it. Our

environment and the biodiversity of the country is our natural heritage which has provided our sustenance down the centuries and provided for our needs for generations and it should therefore be preserved for posterity.

You, staff and students of this University, are lucky to have a huge pristine natural forest as your boundary. This provides a great opportunity for you to develop educational models for environmental conservation that can be emulated by other institutions.

We still need to do more in the preservation of our history and creating information centres which can serve as global reference points for scholars and researchers seeking to learn more about Kenya and her people. The history of this institution places it in a unique position to contribute to creating such a centre to and bridge the information gaps on this history. Furthermore, there are those of us who have been in leadership for a while, and belong to an older generation who might be able to point you to where such information might be. It is also viable that we could also share with you material in our custody as a starting point in creating these repositories.

As I end, I urge those leading the August institution to inculcate in their curriculum life skills that need to be imparted into our young people to be responsible members of the larger Society. It well to attain high level skills in the technical areas, but it is also important that attain skills to enable you live harmoniously with members of society. I have in mind skills that enhance tolerance to different views of fellow men, skills geared promotion of peace, skills that inculcate ethical behaviour in the practice of our trades and above all else patriotism to our Nation. Let seek to create well rounded individuals who have the right mix of skills as it is only in this way that there contribution their livelihoods and that of the society will be assured.

Finally ladies and gentlemen let me take this opportunity to congratulate fellow graduands for attaining your degrees, Diplomas and Certificates. Be good ambassadors of this Institution wherever you will find gainful employment. I also commend your parents and guardians for the sacrifices undertaken to support your education. I also commend the University Administration for the hard work and sacrifice to realize today's achievement.