

Graduation of 2021

Speech of the Chairman of the University Council

Prof. Olubayi Olubayi

We Should Become Producers of Technologies and Innovations

Our new Chancellor, His Excellence Dr. Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan, the former-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria; The President of Uganda; Our Guest of Honour; members of the diplomatic corps present; Chancellors and Vice Chancellors of sister universities; families of today's graduands; government officials present; students and graduands; ladies and gentlemen:

On behalf of the University Council of Cavendish University Uganda, I wish to begin by expressing my gratitude to our new Chancellor, His Excellence Dr. Goodluck Ebele Azikiwe Jonathan, the former-President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, for accepting to extend his pan-African commitments to include his new role of Chancellor of an East African University. Your Excellency, welcome to East Africa.

Once again, the deadly global pandemic, Covid-19, has forced us to hold a technological and scientific graduation ceremony in which most of the graduates are attending using digital networks and digital devices. The very manner in which we are holding this graduation today is living proof that the theme of today's graduation – which is ***technology - enabled learning, innovation, and growth***—known in short by the acronym **TELIG**, is an apt description of our present and future as a university.

Cavendish University was already moving towards technology-enabled learning, innovation, and growth, when the pandemic forced the university to accelerate all its processes, quickly embrace TELIG and move all learning, teaching and research online. I am delighted to note that, in fact, Cavendish University was the first University in Uganda to hold a virtual graduation last year, and also the first to move all teaching and learning online. Our Vice Chancellor, Prof. John Francis Mugisha, informs me that Cavendish continues to share its experiences and findings about online teaching and learning with other universities across East Africa as part of its commitment to national and global community service.

The same pandemic that has moved our teachers and students online, is also teaching us that without continuous innovation such as that of rapid development of vaccines as deadly viruses and other infectious microbes mutate, the entire human race could be heavily damaged, or even eliminated, by pandemics. The vaccines that are currently saving lives, and starting to restore various economies, were developed in record time and most of them are based on innovations that are completely new to public health such as that of Messenger-RNA vaccines.

Africa is currently a beneficiary and a beggar of technologies and innovations that have been discovered, developed and built in other continents. These innovations include things that dominate our modern lives such as the Internet, computers, smartphones, mobile-money,

cars, boda-bodas, flour-milling machines, Panadol, refined-petroleum, and purified oxygen. Without these borrowed technologies and innovations, we would be stuck in the stone age.

But for how long shall we remain beneficiaries and beggars of other people's technologies? Asian countries that had fallen behind the Western World such as Japan, China and India have woken up and caught up. They are no longer beneficiaries and beggars of other people's technologies and innovations. They have deployed vision, policy, and university-based brains to transform their societies from beggars of technologies and innovations, into producers of technologies and innovations. For illustration, think of Japanese cars and electronics; Chinese road-building and satellites; and Indian internet-apps and vaccines.

May I appeal to all of you to note that, although we are currently beggars of other people's technologies, we are fully capable of becoming producers of technologies and innovations. The best evidence of this comes from the fact that when Africans educated right here in Africa get the opportunity to work in highly enabling environments abroad, they are as successful as the best of those countries.

The best example today is the Nigerian medical doctor—Dr. Onyema Ogbuagu—who played a key role in the co-discovery and development of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine in America. Dr. Onyema Ogbuagu who is currently a professor of medicine at Yale University, is a graduate of Nigeria's University of Calabar. America's ivy-league Yale University has provided Dr Onyema ogbuagu with an environment that has enabled him to co-invent a Covid-19 vaccine that is saving millions of lives today. The University of Calabar is not yet able to provide such an environment to Africa's best brains (https://medicine.yale.edu/profile/onyema_ogbuagu/).

The challenge for all African universities, including Cavendish University, is to find ways of collaborating with policy makers to create environments that will enable Africans like Dr. Onyema Ogbuagu to transform African countries from being beggars of other people's technologies and innovations, to being produces of technologies and innovations.

Thank you and God Bless.