

SPEECH DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY, DR. GOODLUCK EBELE JONATHAN, ON CAVENDISH UNIVERSITY UGANDA'S 10TH GRADUATION CEREMONY- AUGUST 26, 2021

PROTOCOL

First, I must congratulate Cavendish University and the students on the 10th Graduation Ceremony of this great institution. As we mark this event, we are celebrating all of you and ushering in another decade of greater and better things to come.

I also want to specially appreciate the university sponsors and University Council for nominating me to work as Chancellor, following in the footsteps of two very eminent sons of Africa, H.E. Benjamin Mkapa and H.E. Dr. Kenneth Kaunda. Your choices for the University Chancellor shows that your Pan-African ideology is noble and your goal of building an international university is very commendable.

It is indeed an honour to inherit a seat formerly occupied by these two great Pan-Africanists, both of who had passed on to eternal glory. I must say that Cavendish University has a knack for hitting the bull's eye again and again to have got these two great African leaders to serve as successive chancellors of the university.

I can say that Kaunda who died last June at the age of 97 years was a propelling force for Africa's struggle for independence and I am glad that I maintained a personal relationship with him for a long time and benefitted exceedingly from his wealth of wisdom and sense of courage.

My commendation also goes to my predecessor H.E. Benjamin Mkapa for his tremendous work of guiding the university through transition to a technology-enabled university complete with an artificially intelligent learning platform.

This has helped CUU to stay afloat during the time of the global Covid19 pandemic. I believe this is a solid foundation upon which we can build a greater future together.

Late Mkapa will continue to be remembered by many as an honest man, a trusted leader and dependable person. CUU was lucky to have had him as a Chancellor.

As President of my country, I was the Visitor to the universities owned by the Federal Government across the country, but the position of a Chancellor is new to me.

I am delighted to have been honoured with this special position where I have to not only directly participate in the university's major events but also be part of its growth and development journey.

CUU'S INNOVATION-DRIVEN LEARNING

There is no doubt that graduation is an important event in the calendar of every university. More importantly, it is a special day for the graduands and I join their families and well-wishers to offer my congratulations on this great achievement.

We at Cavendish are proud of your accomplishments and are quite optimistic that you are going out there as our great ambassadors to make a difference in the society.

As worthy graduands of this university, well qualified in character and learning, you are positively wired by the total education you have received here to positively impact the social, political and economic environment of your various countries.

I am aware CUU is a leading international university in the country with a very diverse student population hailing from over 25 countries. This offers students a unique multi-cultural experience and wide connections that are required in the current situation when the world has become a global village

It is delighting to note that CUU was among the first in Uganda to embrace technology-enabled learning (TEL) even before the menace of Covid-19 pandemic when traditional distance learning (DL) was replaced with Studying via a Learning Platform, which permits learners' interaction with instructors and fellow learners.

It is for this reason that CUU remained in operation when other universities shut down due to Covid-19 lockdown and simply opened Platform Accounts for all its formerly on-campus students enabling them to continue learning from home without interrupting their studies.

It is not surprising that CUU became the first university in Uganda to hold Virtual and Scientific graduation held last year in May.

THE TASK AHEAD

I believe that whereas so much has been done, there is still a lot for us to do to realise the vision of the sponsors which is to increase access of millions of Africans to high quality, research-driven and industry-relevant education.

Although the rising demand for higher education has engendered rapid growth in the number of private universities across Africa, the picture of a frightening youth bulge and worsening economic outlook indicate that the chances of higher education for deserving African children is quite low.

Africa continues to grapple with the challenge of education exclusion and low enrolment at all levels, in a world faced with fast-paced learning, rapidly evolving curricula and technology driven innovation.

We need to focus on removing barriers to access of higher education for many African youth who are talented but disadvantaged by poverty and low incomes. The sponsorship by governments is limited to their own revenue bases and available mainly in public education institutions. There is need to secure scholarships for the talented but poor youth, even if it means connecting them to loan schemes where they can pay later.

There is a working example in South Africa where a non-governmental organisation (NGO) known as Fundi which serves as a leading education finance agency provides loans to students in tertiary institutions. This is a successful scheme that could be replicated in other African countries with the assistance of institutions that promote education on the continent.

We should also ensure that the university education we offer intersects and engages with the social and economic challenges within the national, regional, continental and global contexts. As an international university, our students will need a sufficient dose of comparative socio-economic analytical tools to be able to sail through the current situation and contribute meaningfully to the solutions of problems that afflict their communities locally, nationally and internationally.

Our task will be to engage industry across the region and the continent with a view to creating academia-industry partnerships. This will work better if the academia supports industry with action research to strengthen production, distribution and marketing while industry supports the university with research funding, internship placement opportunities for students and the offer of industry practitioners to support teaching and learning with the current business trends and hand-on experience.

On the part political leaders, I urge them to lead innovations that will add value to the continent's mineral resources and primary produce. In this regard, they should prioritise the establishment of more cottage industries to process these products in order to create more wealth and jobs for the people.

CONCLUSION

In closing, let me reiterate that I am indeed proud to be associated with all of you, the graduating students and the university, knowing that you have received the best possible education available on the continent.

As you celebrate this moment of glory, I charge all of you that have come this far to realise that with this achievement comes the responsibility to deploy the market-driven training you have received at CUU to solving Africa's problems and making considerable contribution to the growth of your professions.

I should also remind you that we live in a rapidly changing world which requires you to constantly retrain yourself, pursue new knowledge and skills in order to remain relevant and make society better.

As for us in Cavendish we will continue to build on the foundation of a sound technology, and work together to expand enrolment opportunities for students and to offer quality education that is uniquely practical, analytical, market-relevant and solution-oriented in a world with intermittent problems.

I thank you all.

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