



**SPEECH BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR OF MAKERERE
UNIVERSITY**

PROFESSOR JOHN DDUMBA-SSENTAMU

**AT PROF. JACK MAPANJE'S POETRY READING SESSION
IN THE CEDAT CONFERENCE HALL**

TUESDAY, 12TH MARCH, 2013

Our Dear Guest, Prof. Jack Mapanje,
All Guest Writers at the African Writers' Trust International Conference,
The African Writers' Trust Director, Ms Goretti Kyomuhendo,
The Ag. Deputy Principal, CHUSS
The Dean, School of Languages, Literature and Communication,
The Head, Department of Literature
Members of the Makerere University Community,
Students
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you to Makerere University, Uganda's largest and second-oldest higher institution of learning. This event is taking place amidst celebrations commemorating 90 years of Makerere University, which were launched on August 4, 2012, by H.E. Yoweri K. Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda. We shall conclude the year-long celebrations on August 3, this year, with a ground-breaking ceremony for the establishment of a Students Centre. I wish to take this opportunity to invite all of you to the Grand Finale on August 3.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are greatly honoured that Prof. Jack Mapanje has taken time off the writer's conference to come to speak to us about poetry. Prof. Mapanje, I know that this is your life's passion and that at one time it cost you three years, seven months and sixteen days in Mikuyu Prison in Malawi. I know that you were never charged and never tried. Despite the challenges you have faced, you manage to live your life with graciousness and hope that is moving. I am proud to note that even after the harrowing experiences of prison and the fact of having to leave Malawi your beloved home, you continue to write, teach and inspire the young and old to think about issues of justice, matters of the conscience, and the greatness of Literature as a subject.

I would like to say that Makerere University is proud of you and your great contribution to African Literature. You may know that when you were in prison, the Literature Department, Makerere University joined other African Universities to protest your

imprisonment. I am grateful that you continue to subscribe to this solidarity as your presence here shows.

Makerere University is proud of its rich history as far as African Literature and Writing is concerned. The landmark conference of writers of English expression was held here in 1962 and its events have firmly shaped the direction of Written African Literature. It was at this conference that Ngugi wa Thiong'o who was a student here started to take his Creative Writing seriously. Apart from the conference, Makerere University is associated with many of the great names in African Literature: The great Malawian poet and your great friend Prof. David Rubadiri studied and taught here for a long time and Makerere claims him as our very own. It is with this background that we count it a privilege to host you and to thank you for working for the development of African Literature as a whole. We are honoured that you have come to encourage our students to continue reading and writing and in essence improve their minds.

I thank the African Writers' Trust particularly its Director Ms Gorette Kyomuhendo for inviting you to Uganda. I also thank the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and in particular the School of Languages, Literature and Communication together with the Literature Department for organising this event and for working closely with the Public Relations office Makerere University to make sure the event is a success.

I would also like to hail the Makerere University Literature Association for their enthusiasm and hard work in making sure you are warmly welcomed.

On behalf of the Makerere University Community, I would like to say again that we are pleased to have you read to us and to hear your ideas of how to strengthen Literature on the Continent.

I thank you for all your contributions as Makerere University builds for the future.

NOTE: Professor Oswald Ndoleriire, Ag. Principal, College of Humanities and Social Sciences read the Vice Chancellor's speech.