

SPEECH OF HIS EXCELLENCY MWAI KIBAKI, FORMER  
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF KENYA AT THE  
CELEBRATION OF 90 YEARS OF MAKERERE UNIVERSITY ON  
3<sup>RD</sup> AUGUST, 2013 AT MAKERERE UNIVERSITY GROUNDS

The President of the Republic of Uganda and Commander in  
Chief of the Uganda Peoples' Defense Forces, His Excellency  
Yoweri Kaguta Museveni,

The Vice President of Uganda, Edward Ssekandi

Prime Minister, Rt. Hon Amama Mbabazi

Deputy Prime Ministers,

Cabinet Ministers,

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Religious Leaders

Chancellor, Makerere University

Council Chair, Makerere University,

Vice-Chancellor,

Deputy Vice Chancellors

Lecturers

Members of Staff

Students

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am grateful to be a witness to this momentous occasion, indeed one of a kind in the history of Makerere University through the 90 years of its existence.

Ninety years is, by all means, a long time. But for Makerere, it is not the number of the years alone that counts. Rather, it is the institution's iconic and illustrious story. Makerere's is a story of transformation. Indeed, the sea of humanity Makerere has influenced and inspired both directly and by extension over the years is deep and very broad.

In retrospect, the tentacles of the Makerere narrative are, no doubt, of a kind in the entire African continent. And so is the permeation of that narrative's influence right across several national borders and economies, particularly within the greater eastern and central Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On a more personal and sentimental note, I graduated from Makerere in 1955. And between 1958 and 1960, I came back here to teach Economics. My testimony and appreciation of Makerere is, therefore solidly firsthand.

This fact, however, is not unique to me. The tribute I pay to Makerere is, in fact, an echo of similar sentiments shared by several other people who owe their academic, leadership and intellectual foundations to this great institution. As an alumnus of this university, therefore, I am fully immersed in the rhyme and reason of the historic moment Makerere marks today and the journey the occasion launches into the 21st Century, a period dubbed the African moment and/or the African century. In a word, I am proud to be associated with Makerere.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Deep inside and on the sidelines of Makerere's nine decades of existence is a rich legacy of memorable firsts and important breakthroughs. This fact, if for nothing else, makes the theme of this commemoration dubbed—Celebrating 90 Years of Makerere: Leadership Towards Africa's Transformation in the 21st Century—both significant and timely.

Allow me to briefly put the revered place Makerere occupies in its historical context. First, Makerere of the 1950 and 60s was an unprecedented melting pot of Africa's rich diversity. Back in the day, there was hardly any other arena in sub-Saharan Africa where different cultures, religions and belief systems freely mingled and interrogated each other.

During this critical stage of the first African renaissance, Makerere—as modern-day information and communication technology enthusiasts would put it—was the only place in our immediate world with boundless Bluetooth. The atmosphere created by Makerere broadened worldviews

whilst greatly enriching mindsets of many.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have no doubt in my mind that Makerere's reputation as a consummate fountain of knowledge is integral to its calling and culture. The list of notable people who trace their roots and the shaping of their worldview to Makerere is sufficient testament of the fountain that Makerere was and remains to date.

Several of our region's post-independence leaders including Tanzania's Mwalimu Julius Kambarage Nyerere, Uganda's Milton Obote, Benjamin Mkapa and Joseph Kabila are products of Makerere.

Embedded in Makerere's alumni, faculty and associates is a group of distinguished men and women of Letters whose immense and timeless influence is of global proportion. These include, Nuruddin Farah, Ali Mazrui, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, V. S. Naipaul and Peter Nazareth.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Regionally, Makerere pioneered in training experts whose contribution in such sectors as Agriculture, Medicine, Science, Economics, Business and Public Administration set the pace for the development the east and central Africa region boasts today. Furthermore, veterans in various development-related careers whose skills were honed at Makerere became the catalysts and trailblazers to whom the emergence of universities and colleges across the region is attributed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Perhaps the most profound attribute of Makerere and one that should serve as a good example to our latter-day universities is its indomitable resilience. During the regrettable years when political turmoil hit Uganda, the one institution that stood the tempest as if nothing downbeat was afoot was Makerere. The important lesson here is that our institutional, moral and intellectual watersheds must be built upon solid rock. This will ensure that when the rebound moment finally comes calling, we will not be found rudderless as individual nations or a community of nations.

To this end, I believe that the ongoing integration of the East African Community can be founded on the tenets that have made Makerere a formidable champion of the greater good in our region. Universities and other institutions of higher learning in eastern Africa have a big role to play, and one hopes they will not sleep on the job.

In particular, as we move deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, these institutions must join the leaders of their nations in search of answers to the persistent challenges of poverty in the midst of plenty. That plenty is in form of natural resources. Our institutions higher learning owe the people answers to such questions as:

*1) How do we instil an industrial culture among our people, especially the youth, so that they embark on modern use of resources available to us as the means by which we can then move our people en mass from a market yard of gross consumers into producers and value addition agents?*

*2) What concrete measures do we take to lift our citizenry from poverty and want to a people with dignity and unassailable self-confidence; a people who can ably play their part fully in the community of modern nations?*

These are the critical questions Makerere and its alumni as well as its current crop of tutors and students must address as we inch deeper into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. As older Makererians, we have done our part. We have breathed hope to the generations that follow us. It's now the turn for young Makererians to break new grounds through innovative research geared towards African transformation.

The younger crop of our intellectuals should expand our horizons of imagination and creativity in order to forge practical solutions that can yield measurable results. Our gallant young men and women in the academia, whether in Makerere or in other similar institutions in Africa must make the 21<sup>st</sup> Century count insofar as intellectual excellence and problem solving are concerned.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, may I congratulate Makerere University, its leadership and the leadership of Uganda for giving our region and the world a worthy example whose fruit is of global significance.

Long Live Makerere.

Thank you and God bless you all.