

SPEECH BY THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY, STATE DEPARTMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH, DR. BEATRICE INYANGALA, DURING THE KARATINA UNIVERSITY 10TH GRADUATION CEREMONY ON FRIDAY 9TH DECEMBER 2022 AT THE GRADUATION SQUARE

His Excellency, the Deputy President of the Republic of Kenya, Hon. Rigathi Gachagua,

Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education, Hon. Ezekiel Machogu,

Chairman of Council, Karatina University, Prof. Francis Gichaga,

Members of Council,

Vice Chancellor, Prof. Mucai Muchiri,

All faculty, staff and students,

Graduands,

Parents,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

I am honored to be here today to witness the conferment of degrees to these graduands. We congratulate all of them for their hard work, invested time and sustained effort throughout their stay at the University. We also recognize the support, both moral and financial, from parents and guardians to see to it that their children attain higher education. I also thank the University Council, Senate, Management Board and the entire University community for supporting them to achieve the success being celebrated today. I believe that they have been nurtured and are well prepared for the task ahead of them, that of driving the Country's social economic agenda. I encourage them to embrace the power of creativity and innovation in order to remain relevant in the current highly competitive work environment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to note that Karatina University has continued to provide quality higher education through competency-based training, research and innovation. As a Ministry, we are keen to see that universities offer quality programmes that are market-driven and enhance creativity, especially in this era of the digital economy. I have no doubt in my mind that our universities not only share similar aspirations but endeavour to bring this to reality. The Ministry of Education affirms its commitment to upscaling the standards of university education in the country in order to make it more responsive to the demands of the job market. In respect of the outcomes of the Presidential Working Party on Education Reforms, the Government will put in place measures aimed at reforming the higher education system. We urge all the sector players to support the efforts of the Government as it pursues these reforms.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There is a need to strengthen existing institutions of higher learning by ensuring that they are well-equipped and have the capacity, including faculty, to deliver quality education. To stand out from the rest, I urge the leadership of our universities to identify their unique niche areas and capitalize on them. The Government is willing to boost support for these institutions which demonstrate innovativeness, entrepreneurship and active linkages with industry players. They will get priority in accessing incentives from the Government while being linked to bilateral partners so that they can grow their niches and deepen their research capacity.

In addition, while I note that research is important, I encourage our scholars to intensify their efforts to conduct relevant research addressing food security, climate change, water scarcity, health and affordable housing among other challenges affecting society. Research from universities should in sync with the country's aspirations of becoming a medium-income nation in line with Vision 2030 and other developmental agenda as articulated by the Government of Kenya.

Ladies and gentlemen,

One of the strategic objectives under the National Education Sector Strategic Plan for the period 2018 – 2022 is to enhance access and equity to education. However, there continues to be low enrolment of women in universities compared to that of boys. This is further compounded by the fact that only a few of these women are enrolled in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers. There is definitely a need to lower the gender gap in these professions. I, therefore, call upon education sector players to offer training and mentorship in these areas in order to attract women into STEM careers. By doing this, we will be offering our women an opportunity to participate in the improvement of many aspects affecting society. Working together with relevant stakeholders, the Ministry will endeavour to institute measures that will promote gender equality to ensure women's participation in all spheres.

Finally, I wish to, once again, express my warmest congratulations to the graduands for achieving this milestone in their academic life. Indeed, years of hard work and perseverance have paid off. This is the start of a new set of duties and responsibilities. For some, it may be an easy road from here but for others, it may not. All in all, keep moving forward and in due time, your door of opportunity will open up. Thank you.

**Dr. Beatrice Inyangala
Principal Secretary,
State Department for Higher Education and Research
Ministry of Education
Friday, 9th December 2022
Karatina, Kenya.**