

**The Chancellor of Makerere University, Prof. Ezra Suruma,
Hon, Ministers and Members of Parliament present,
Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
Chairperson and Members of Council & Senate
Vice-Chancellor Makerere University and other Vice Chancellors present,
All Distinguished Guests present
Faculty of Makerere University
Parents and Guardians
Graduands,
Ladies and Gentlemen**

Let me start by congratulating all Graduands on this occasion of the 71st Graduation Ceremony of Makerere University. I also congratulate the parents, university administration, and the staff for successfully preparing these young men and women ready for graduation despite the unfortunate situation of COVID-19 that destabilized our education system over the past year.

I am happy to note that a good number of our institutions of higher learning were able to quickly pick up and adapt to open and distance e-learning to enable the candidates complete their training and final examinations. Today, the Universities have demonstrated that we can use the power of technology to keep teaching, examining and graduating students, and I thank you. Moving forward, Government will continue to invest in ICT infrastructure and make this technology affordable so that students at higher institutions of learning are able to continue without disruption and can even make distance learning their choice.

This will not only reduce on the need for physical infrastructure at the Universities, but will also mean that costs previously incurred for transport, feeding and accommodation by our students can be saved and instead invested in acquiring gadgets to access their lessons from wherever they are. For now, we will continue to promote the blended learning approach that has worked well so far – where

students have both the face to face and online experiences during their training.

I congratulate Makerere University for the many innovations and the groundbreaking research that has been conducted in the recent past, and I thank the researchers for their honest utilization of the research funds to benefit our country. It is gratifying to know that Makerere University is gradually transforming into a research-led University because we all recognize the critical role research universities play in generating innovation-based economic growth, both through the training of scientists and engineers and through the generation and transfer of knowledge.

The University is therefore on the right track, and Government will continue to support Makerere and other universities to strengthen their research capacity and deliver a future generation with the right set of skills and knowledge to spur economic growth.

As we aspire to become a competitive middle-income country by 2040, the contribution of our universities is critical, and we rely on the highly skilled University staff to produce graduates with the right knowledge, skills, and attitudes. I therefore urge the staff of our universities to be role models and patriots and always be mindful of the need to nurture and skill our young generation to serve this country productively.

Government will continue to search for resources to fulfil its promise of paying the salaries of personnel in public universities. And so, I urge the staff to be patient as these resources are being looked for.

Let us all feel the burden our country has in addressing the many challenges at hand and together understand that when it is possible, our needs will be addressed.

The White Paper on Higher Education developed from the Rwendeire Visitation

Committee Report, when approved, will provide guidelines to streamline the management of higher education institutions, and I am confident that Makerere and other universities will soon undergo reforms that will create even greater value to our country and make universities efficient engines of our economic development.

Finally on Makerere, we all know that this University is a pioneer in Higher Education on the African continent, and we are glad to see it grow from strength to strength. It has played the role of producing the first pioneer candidates in many professions, and has its alumni across the world.

As we prepare to celebrate 100 years of Makerere University existence in 2022, I call upon all education stakeholders to join hands and support the preparations to make this a truly meaningful celebration. I thank the University Council and Management for all the plans already underway to reach out to various partners to make this a befitting celebration, and we all look forward to the Centennial Celebrations.

To our dear graduands: This is your day and I congratulate you on your achievement. Graduation is a time of celebration and marks the end of one phase and beginning of another phase in life. It is a moment of joy for you, and for your parents and the faculty who supported you throughout this journey. However, please know that your academic journey is not yet over. The decisions you make starting today will determine what you become.

Be yourself and surround yourself with people who wish you well as you transition to service. Go out and diligently serve your country wherever God puts you.

I wish you all God's grace, guidance and good health as you begin your next journey as professionals in your various fields. The Book of Ecclesiastes chapter 9 verse 11 in part reads;

***“The race is not to the swift, Nor the battle to the strong,
Nor bread to the wise, Nor riches to men of understanding,
Nor favor to men of skill; But time and chance happen to them all.”***

Therefore, always remember that life is a marathon, not a sprint. Be humble. Do not boast in your own strength or wisdom or understanding or talent or academic excellence. Instead, choose, with patience and hard work to trust in God’s timing for your life. It is always perfect.

I thank you all, and wish you happy celebrations and God’s blessings.