

**SPEECH BY PROF. GEORGE A. O. MAGOHA, CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 8TH GRADUATION CEREMONY OF SOUTH EASTERN KENYA
UNIVERSITY HELD ON THURSDAY, 23RD NOVEMBER 2021**

Amb. Simon Nabukwesi, Principal Secretary, State Department for University Education and Research,
Dr. Swabah Omar, Chairperson, South Eastern Kenya University Council,
Prof. Geoffrey Muluvi, Vice-Chancellor, South Eastern Kenya University,
Parents and guardians,
Staff and students of South Eastern Kenya University.
Graduands,
Distinguished guests,

I feel greatly honoured to join the South Eastern Kenya University Community during this auspicious occasion of the 8th graduation of the University. Let me take this opportunity to pay tribute to those who are graduating today for achieving this enviable feat, which puts them on the next level of their academic and professional pursuits.

I wish on the onset to extend my appreciation to those who are present here physically and online for being part of this auspicious occasion. I note with appreciation that despite the restrictions on physical contact as a result of the prevailing Covid-19 situation, thousands of us are able to be part of this celebration, thanks to technology.

We all agree that Covid 19 has affected economies and world's labour market. However, it has created opportunities to thrive in equal measure. Shawn Anchor says "The most successful people see adversity not as a stumbling block, but as a stepping stone to greatness". My hope is that you will not stumble but will step on the stone and illuminate the greatness in you.

To the graduands, I wish to congratulate you on this great achievement. I am confident that your experience in SEKU has moulded you into wholesome men and women, fortified with positive character and virtues that will make you thrive as valuable global citizen.

All of us trust that your stay here has transformed you into thinkers and actors with a mission to positively transform lives in Kenya and beyond. Strive to create an inclusive society where the well-being of all is the focus of everyone.

Dear graduands, I am aware that it has not been easy having to go through those years of study with lots of hurdles to surmount. Your situation was made even more difficult by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted not just your learning process but all the processes of the human society.

It is gratifying, however, that despite these hurdles, you are here to receive the results of your hard work. As we come to terms with the reality that the disease is here with us to stay, I urge you to take a positive look at it and you will see numerous opportunities that will change your life for the better.

I wish at the same time to laud the universities and other institutions of higher learning for taking innovative measures to adjust to the situation brought about by the pandemic. These measures include integrating virtual and blended learning.

With the benefit of hindsight, we can look back and say that despite its disruptive nature and the loss of lives, COVID-19 has helped us to think out of the box and come up with methods of making education reachable and affordable to more people.

I wish to laud South Eastern Kenya University Council and Management for the proper utilisation of funds from the national Exchequer and other sources. This prudent application of resources has seen the University complete key infrastructural projects. This has ensured that the university has optimum space for delivery of its programmes.

I urge you, especially the University's academic community to remain adventurous in your work and engage in collaborative and interdisciplinary research projects that harness science and technology to improve the livelihoods of the disadvantage majority.

I note with satisfaction the several active research collaborations and linkages with local and international organisations. These should translate into tangible benefit to society, starting with our immediate community.

I am also aware that the University's staff have continued to secure funding from the National Research Fund and other research agencies to advance their research agenda. As a University located in a rural setting, I urge you to focus particularly on research undertakings that enhance livelihoods in the local communities.

Continue to strengthen links with the corporate industry, who are the consumers of your products, the graduates. It is through close working relations that the University will know the value of its products. Use the industry linkages to get the vital feedback on how your graduates are performing as you also engage their employers on their needs.

Moreover, as the country gives due attention to technical skills development, this University, with its unique technical training background, stands a good chance to excel in this area. The Government, through the African Development Bank, has invested significantly in technical equipment, which the University should put into use for this purpose.

I invite all stakeholders, including university managements, staff unions and students to walk with us in this journey of ensuring that the country gets proper return on investment particularly in the higher education sub-sector. This includes aligning their academic programmes and research priorities to the national socio-economic aspirations as espoused in the Vision 2030 and the Big Four Agenda.

As I end my address, I wish to, once more, congratulate the South Eastern Kenya University Class of 2021 on their achievement today. Let me also commend all those who have played their respective parts in enabling our graduands today to achieve their dreams. It took the hard work and sacrifice of many, including parents, guardians, sponsors, University staff, and partners of the University.

Thank you

Prof. George Magoha
Cabinet Secretary, Ministry of Education