ST. PAUL'S UNIVERSITY

22ND GRADUATION CEREMONY OCTOBER 4, 2013

SPEECH BY PROF. JACOB KAIMENYI

THE HON. CABINET SECRETARY FOR EDUCATION

- The University Chancellor, Hon. Dr. Samuel Kobia.
- Chairman of the University Council His Grace The Most Rev. Dr. Eliud Wabukala
- The Chair of the Board of Trustees, Rt. Rev. Moderator David Gathanju
- Council members and Board of Trustees
- The Vice Chancellor, Prof. Joseph Galgalo
- Faculty, Staff and Students
- Distinguished Guests,
- Graduands, ladies and gentlemen

I am honored to be here today to witness this great day. First allow me to bring to you greetings from His Excellency the President, Uhuru Muigai Kenyatta who had desired very much to be with you today and unable due to other pressing national duties.

As most of you will know I am an academician myself and was until my current appointment the Deputy Vice Chancellor at the University of Nairobi and therefore higher education is close to my heart. I am therefore feeling at home being in a University today. I take this opportunity to congratulate the University on its 22nd graduation today and give special recognition to those graduating today.

Ladies and gentlemen

The government appreciates the role played by private Universities in this country to fill the gap left by our limited spaces in the public Universities. I want to appreciate the efforts of the sponsoring churches who took up the challenge to establish this ecumenical University. This institution has over the years produced great men and women whose service to this country and the world is well known. We specifically appreciate your deliberate decision to incorporate ethics into your training. I take cognizance that you greatly emphasize holistic education, which equally keen on spiritual formation as it is on

academic excellence. We believe this focus has helped in shaping the work ethic of our citizenry. Allow me also to recognize the administration of this University for the effort in growing this university from a small student population of 500 students when you received the Charter in 2007 to the current enrolment of over 5,000 students. I also recognize that this year's graduation is your biggest graduation yet with 1,153 students graduating with various awards of certificates, diploma, bachelors and masters degrees.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The theme of this graduation 'nurturing talents for a greater Kenya' captures our collective aspiration as a country. The theme resonates with our focus as a government to empower our young people, who we believe are the key drivers in our endeavor to achieve the goals of Vision 2030. I am pleased to note that St. Paul's University has emphasized on identifying and nurturing talents amongst your students. Your focus on holistic training is to be lauded because it helps produce quality graduates who are not just good academically but are also well equipped for the workplace. Indeed the recent completion of your state of the art student centre is a notable achievement and demonstrates that you are determined to provide a conducive environment where your students can sharpen their skills as they enjoy recreational facilities and grow their talents.

One of the greatest challenges affecting higher education in this country is the production of half baked graduates who lack the basic skills and often are unable to fit in the current job market. There is often an unacceptable disconnect between the academia and the industry. I am glad that this University is well aware of these challenges and is keen on mentorship programs, internships, industrial attachments and incorporation of life skills in your training. I want to urge the administration of this University to continue with this endeavor and expand it even more. All Universities in our country must be challenged to emphasize on practical learning tempered with character formation and enterprise. We must ensure that the graduates we release into the larger society are not only nurtured intellectually but also be empowered and prepared to contribute an ever increasingly competitive global market.

Ladies and gentlemen

As you may all know the University Act 2012 came into force at the close of last year. The review of the laws governing the higher education sector was aimed at streamlining the sector and facilitating a robust growth even as we maintain quality. We are committed to providing a level playing field between the public and private universities in this country. The University act 2012 will, for example, establish the Kenya Universities and

Colleges Central Placement Service Board which will coordinate the placement of government sponsored students in all universities, public and private. This will ensure that a student who completes form four and qualifies for a university placement is provided with wider options than was the case before. I challenge private universities St. Paul's University included to develop their infrastructure so as to benefit more from government sponsored students when we implement this. This is the time to identify what you are good at and establish flagship programs or disciplines study by which you can be known. Such focus, I believe is one way of ensuring we produce the best in various fields and become more competitive than we usually are. I urge my ministry and the Commission for University Education to move with speed in the implementation of the provisions of the Universities Act so that the education sector can benefit fully.

Ladies and gentlemen,

And now to the graduands

Today is the culmination of years of hard work and commitment, which has been recognized by the award of your various qualifications. Your achievement is no mean feat and we congratulate you. This award demonstrates your diligence and obviously many sacrifices. It a reflection of a focused life as well as a testimony to the support you must have received from your friends and families. This recognition must endear you to greater appreciation of your talents and achievements and spur you to service of humanity.

The world you are getting in is a very competitive one. With your award today, however, you have an advantage and an opportunity to advance and to grow.

Going by the theme of this year, I hope that you will use your gifts, talents and skills to get ahead and much more to serve God and humanity and to give to the world your best. Kenya needs dedicated individuals who will not only give of their skills but of their time beyond what is required of them. I hope you will be counted among those who distinguish themselves in their specific roles and create positive impact in adding value to their communities and station of service.

I challenge you to live your life with integrity. Always strive to do something positive and to make a difference.

As I conclude my remarks allow me to reiterate government's commitment to the expansion of quality higher education in the country and recognition of the role of the private sector. Let us work together in empowering the youth of this country. Thank you all and may God richly bless you.