

**ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED
REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA AND CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
DODOMA BENJAMIN W. MKAPA TO PIONEER STUDENTS OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF DODOMA, NOVEMBER 2nd, 2007**

The Chairman of the University of Dodoma Council,

Hon Mohammed G. Bilal,

Vice-Chancellor, University of Dodoma, Prof. Idris S. Kikula,

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academics, Research and Consultancy),

Prof. Ludovick Kinabo,

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Planning, Finance and Administration),

Prof. Shaban Mlacha,

Deans,

Lecturers, Administrative Staff

President and Deputy President of University of Dodoma Student Organization (UDOSO)

Students of the University of Dodoma,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Let me start by words of thanks and congratulations.

I thank our President, HE Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete for asking me to be the first Chancellor of the University of Dodoma. This is a titular position but it is a great honour and in carrying out its attendant responsibilities I shall try to live up to his expectations.

I thank him for asking Dr. Mohamed Gharib Bilal to be the first Chairman of the University Council. In the early nineties he and I worked at the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education as Permanent Secretary and Minister respectively, and helped shape the growth and direction of higher education in the country. I believe we shall make a success of our new partnership.

I thank the partners and donors, both within and outside the country. Their contributions in word, deed and spirit have enabled the University to make a robust start.

I congratulate the Vice-Chancellor, his two Deputies Deans and the Faculty upon their appointment. I congratulate the students who have the distinct privilege of constituting the first intake of the University of Dodoma (UDOM).

All of us, together with the non-academic staff now bond together in the Community of the University. This is a new university. Because the frontiers of knowledge keep receding century after century and decade after decade, we must consider ourselves frontiers men and women. Additionally being a new university in a poor developing country such as ours, we should consider ourselves challenged pioneers. For the life and repute of this university will, in the end, be determined by the foundation which this founding community lays.

My alma mater is Makerere University College, then affiliated to the University of London. Its motto was: “Pro futuro aedificamus” – “We are building for the future.” As you can see, and as one lecturer pointed out to me jokingly at the time, it is full of vagueness. It is flattering and perhaps satisfying to everyone that they are building. But exactly *what* are they building?

Fortunately, University of Dodoma’s motto is a little more specific: “Embracing Knowledge.” Our official Abstract further states the university vision as seeking to become a Center of Excellence and a valued member of the global community offering a comprehensive education in diversified academic programmes geared towards intellectual transformation, resulting in knowledge needed to competently and comprehensively solve development challenges. I want to share my thoughts with you about how we shall realize this vision.

But to set the stage I should start with a light anecdote. A Surgeon, a Field Marshal and a Politician had a very liquid lunch together and were now in a deep argument.

“A Surgeon’s job is the oldest profession in the world,”

Said the Surgeon.

“What makes you say that? Asked the Field Marshal.

“Well” replied the surgeon, “when woman was created she was made from one of Adam’s ribs and surely, only a surgeon could do something like that.”

“Nonsense” snorted the Field Marshal.” Even before Adam and Eve there was a world and it is said that order was created out of chaos. Who else could do that but a soldier of the highest rank?”

“Ah!” Said the politician. “But who do you think created the chaos to be sorted out?”

Since we are in process of creating the University I am comforted by the fact that my participation is that of an ex-Politician!!

The academic staff are called lecturers and professors. In my time they did not like being called teachers, a title reserved for instructors of schools. But in reality their titles seek to differentiate the way in which knowledge is given. Where in schools students are taught, at university they are expected to seek and acquire knowledge. They are expected to take more initiative, or to use the current favoured expression, to be more pro-active in getting their knowledge. This calls for considerable independent exploration of the scope and frontiers of knowledge through reading and reflection. I hope therefore that studies will be characterized more by learning than teaching.

Interruptions to the learning process have featured prominently on campuses in recent years. Causes have varied from the quality of education, through bursaries and loans to sour relations between university administrations and student governments. I plead for a culture of positive interaction and the spirit of cooperative problem solving. The human resource factor in our development is so much in deficit that we cannot afford a day’s delay, let alone weeks, in their formation. Let all members of this community strive to build a harmonious academic society.

Chairman of Council, Vice-Chancellor, Faculty and Students,

We want to develop UDOM as a Center of Excellence. One distinctive attribute of a center of excellence is that it is a Think Tank. Its members and stakeholders think about the condition of the people and the nation’s destiny. They undertake thoughtful analysis of political, economic and social conditions. They make critiques of development plans and strategies for their implementation. They pose alternative paradigms of change and people-centered development plans.

This interpretation conforms well to the perception of our founding President and Father of the Nation Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere of the role of the university in Tanzania. Opening the University College campus on 21st August 1964, he said:

“We have no alternative but to apply ourselves scientifically and objectively to the problems of our country. We have to think; and then act on our thinking. We have to recognize the poverty, the ignorance and the disease, the social attitudes and the political atmosphere which exist, and in that context think about what we want to do and how we can move from existing situation towards one which we like better.”

But to respond effectively to Mwalimu’s exhortation demands that people be well read and studious. In my studies I was introduced to a 16th century philosopher who wrote: “Read not to contradict and confute; nor to believe and take for granted; nor to find talk and discourse; but to weigh and consider.” He added: “Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man. And therefore if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little he had need have a present wit; and if he read little, he had need have much cunning, to seem to know , that he doth not.”

However, in exercising our minds we must try as much as possible to grapple with issues that are relevant to and from our perspective. For otherwise we will be letting others think for us concerning our problems and the solutions to them.

For example, in Political Science we must ask ourselves: Granted the universality of its principles, must our Democracy be institutionalized, structured and operationalized according to the model of Western Europe or America? The point was compellingly driven home to me by a letter in the Financial Times of London dated 11th October by one Giles Cattermole from Berkshire, England, responding to another writer, one Philip Stephens, who had discussed the coverage of the Middle East and Al Qaeda entitled “The dishonest impartiality that tolerates intolerance.” Among other things he wrote:

“Leaving aside the biased language (totalitarian, abomination, terrorist, violent, subordination, vicious and so on) Mr. Stephens’ principal argument is no more than that “they reject everything for which the West stands”.

And why not? It is the west's intolerance to suppose that multi-party democracy is what everybody on earth wants – and, under George W. Bush, is going to get, whether they want it or not.

The evidence is widespread – from Algeria to Russia to much of the Middle East, Asia, Africa and South America – that is not necessarily what they want.

Forcing democracy down their throats at the point of a gun just breeds resentment, suicide bombers ...”

Don't get me wrong. I am not against multipartism. And I condemn Al Qaida as totally evil. What I ask myself, and I think you should ask yourselves as thinkers, is whether we must be copy-cats of western multiparty democratic practice!! Must African politicians be echoes and vassals of Western Democratic Forms?

Or take the Natural Sciences. How do we define the development challenge of Environment? From our perspective what is the impact of climate change on us and how do we interact equitably with developed countries?

Or take the study of health sciences. How did generations of our ancestors cure various diseases? How did they survive? And how do we go about preserving traditional medicinal indigenous knowledge?

Consider the discipline of economics. From our standpoint and viewpoint, what are the assumptions underlying the present global economic architecture? Are errors in planning projections and misjudgments of the impact of policies and forecasts the exclusive fate of third world economies? To our rural citizen who grows food on own land he owns, draws free water from the villages well, has free access to treatment at his ward dispensary, how does the concept of “living at less than one dollar a day” apply?

Alternately, look at the social sciences. How relevant to us and sacred to them i.e. the “developed western countries, are the principles and values of social organization in the western mode? As to the family unit, is our extended family system inferior to the so-called nuclear family system? Is the extended family fundamentally unprogressive, anti-development?

Chairman of Council, Vice-Chancellor, Facults and Students

I have selected these areas of learning and put these questions randomly. My intention is to highlight the reality that we do not think enough for ourselves, that we undervalue our own

knowledge heritage and that we acquiesce too readily to the marginalization of our knowledge stake and entitlement in the international community. Knowledge is simply too Euro and America-centric.

My plea therefore is that this University should be more assertive and more enterprising. We must dynamically seek our place on the knowledge arena, reflect our thinking on to the international platform of development discourse and determination. Time is not on our side; the tide may even be against us. The put-downs are mounting. Let me illustrate.

In the October 14 edition of the London Times the distinguished scientist James Watson who shared the 1962 Nobel Prize for discovering the double helix structure of DNA, and incidentally is a white man, said he was “inherently gloomy” about prospects for Africa because “all our social policies are based on the fact that their intelligence is the same as ours – whereas all the testing says not really”. He went on to say that while he hoped that everyone was equal, “people who deal with black employees find this not true.”

Not surprisingly, his comments aroused an international outcry, especially by the African Diasporas. Whereupon he offered an afterthought apology thus: “To those who have drawn the inference from my words that Africa as a continent is somewhat genetically inferior, I can only apologize unreservedly. That is not what I meant. More important from my point of view, there is no scientific basis for such belief.”

I invite you to make up your mind on where the burden of conviction springs between the spontaneous statement and the afterthought.

Chairman of Council, Vice-Chancellor, Faculty and Students,

The expansion and acquisition of knowledge should not be an end in itself. Such knowledge is static and fruitless, destined as it surely will be to decay in office and library shelves and the minds of the knowledge holders. We acquire knowledge for a purpose. The principal purpose as, Mwalimu repeatedly stressed, is for using it to build the nation, as informed workers, farmers, professionals, and, yes, even intellectuals.

Addressing the community of the University of Liberia on 29 February 1968 Mwalimu said:

“There is in fact, only one reason why underdeveloped societies like ours establish and maintain universities. We are spending large and disproportionate amounts of money on a few individuals so that they should, in the future, make a disproportionate return to the society. We are investing in a man’s brain in just the same way as we invest in a tractor; and just as we expect the tractor to do many times as much work for us as a hand- hoe, so we expect the student we have trained to make many times as great a contribution to our well-being as the man who has not had this good fortune. We are giving the student while he is at the university, so that we may receive more from him afterwards.”

Chairman of Council, Vice-Chancellor, Faculty and Students,

I am sure Mwalimu was not advocating that our post university minds should operate as mechanically as tractors! I recall these words to reinforce my submission that the learning process at this public university should be a preparation for Service!!

To-days’ world is heavily influenced by the power of information and communication technology. Certainly to-morrow’s world will be heavily determined by it. It is commonplace to say that science and technology are impacting staggeringly on production, marketing and service delivery. On this front of knowledge developing countries must take seriously the exhortation that we must run while others walk.

I note with great satisfaction that the University of Dodoma will have a College of Informatics and Virtual Education. This is unquestionably a special need for the country. I know that this field of development is a particular passion of the Chairman of Council and I am sure he will apply his driving skill to its evolution. I hope additionally that you will be able to incorporate computer literacy into as many courses as possible.

There is one other attribute which must be actively sought by those who pass through the halls of this university, namely the spirit of entrepreneurship. With the present rate of economic growth it is unlikely that all graduates will find a job. There is a limit to the size of bureaucracy that the country can afford. And the private sector thrives upon strict monitoring of staff costs. African economies just cannot absorb the rising number of graduates; indeed the Association of African Universities says as few as one third of African University graduates find salaried work.

And so it is important for them to acquire skills and an attitude of mind that will enable them to employ themselves. That is the harsh and unavoidable reality.

The university must not offer only undergraduate studies. Postgraduate courses are not indispensable for dynamic college life. But they complement the richness of University education as they open opportunities for positive interaction and exchange. I commend you, Mr. Vice-Chancellor and your team for starting Masters Degree Programmes from the very inception in the current academic year. I take this instance also to urge the early commencement of international inter-university exchanges of faculty and students. Preparations should also get underway to establish periodic academic journals and publications as well as students' newsletters both in the arts and the sciences. By these means you will make the university known and cement its academic foundation.

Last September I visited the People's Republic of China. My itinerary included a visit to the Yaelu Academy, an institution of higher learning dating back BC, situated in Changsha the capital of Hunan Province, the birth province of Chairman Mao. There I came across guidelines on learning which were given to the students of those ancient days and which absolutely entranced me. I would like to share them for all they are worth. They implore as follows:

- ❖ Stay in touch with your parents;
- ❖ Pay attention to details in life;
- ❖ Be thrifty in food and clothing;
- ❖ Be detached from things which are none of your business;
- ❖ Mind your manners no matter what you are doing;
- ❖ Don't engage in gossip;
- ❖ Be careful in the friends you choose to make;
- ❖ Don't chitchat your precious time;
- ❖ Go over your lessons three times a day;
- ❖ Become well versed in the ways of government and the world;
- ❖ Take notes and write reflectively while you read;
- ❖ Finish your homework and group discussions on time;
- ❖ Don't sleep late with the excuse of studying hard the previous evening;
- ❖ Strive against all problems in your learning.

As Settler of the BWM HIV/Aids Foundation, I would be neglectful if I did not add an exhortation of my own: Refrain from being infected by the HIV/Aids virus which already is taking the lives of an alarming number of our educated citizens.

Council Chairman, Vice-Chancellor, Faculty and Students

By current projections, the establishment of the University will cost TAS 772.8 Billion, equivalent to US \$628,300,000. Even against rising government tax revenues, this is a big sum of money. We are witnessing a fast growth in the number of secondary school and enrolment. This trend presently irreversibly under way, paves the way for unprecedented mounting pressure for access to higher education. The University of Dodoma's own enrollment target is 40,000 students, in itself no mean feat. These developments augur for unsustainable pressure on the Treasury. I ask us, especially members of Council, by using their knowledge, experience and connections, to join the Government in soliciting assistance from well-wishing and compatible development partners, foundations and international institutions. We should also explore the possibility of local sponsors contributing to a University of Dodoma Endowment Fund.

Let me conclude by crystallizing my challenge to the community of the University of Dodoma with full acknowledgement that it is one of five universities in an academic and development context of more than five private national universities. What are the attributes of a Tanzanian and African University in the third millennium? In fact, basically, what is the black man's position in our common planet under the sun? Do we have a stake? And if we do, is it accepted or even conceded? Do we have any contribution to make to the so-called road map, in reality the fate, of the international community?

A few months ago a leading Western European Leader gave an address at the Sheikh Antar Diop University in Dakar. Promoting his Vision of the advent of a Euro-Africa, he said the following::

“The African peasant only knows the eternal renewal of time, rhythmmed by the endless repetition of the same gestures and the same words. In this imaginary world where everything starts over and over again, there is no place for human adventure or for the idea of progress.”

It is no exaggeration to say that this is the commonplace belief in many learned circles outside our continent. There is a suspicion, if not belief, that African scholars are a rare breed. In the past few years I have served on a number of international commissions and panels looking into the state of development of the world and Africa's place in it. These commissions are served by secretariats that do much of the backroom work and collect relevant research papers and publications. I have had to note with deep concern that contributions from African academics and scholars are extremely scarce – perhaps they are found to be not worth referring to? A viewpoint may well be emerging to the effect that there is also intellectual drought in African scholarship, giving weight to the notion that we are capable only of “repetition of the same gestures and the same words”

This university must prepare to challenge and debunk this stereotype of African Scholarship and the African condition. By study, research, publication, discourse and advocacy, let us invalidate these misconceptions about our history and our biological ancestry. Let us build our capacity and demonstrate our capabilities. Let us assert our rightful place in the sun of human “progress.” Let us affirm our fundamental readiness and disposition to make intellectual and technological development innovations. Let us force the world, and especially the western world, to RETHINK Africa!!

As Mwalimu used to say It can be done; Play your part.

Thank you for your kind attention