



**REMARKS BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI,
PROFESSOR SAMSON SAJIDU, DURING THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI GRADUATION
CEREMONY HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 13TH APRIL 2022 IN THE GREAT HALL, ZOMBA**

Salutations

1. Dr. Levis Eneya, Director of Higher Education, representing the Minister of Education,
2. The Chairman of Council, Dr George Patridge and all Council members of the University of Malawi
3. Chairpersons of Councils of MUBAS, KUHES and other universities
4. Vice Chancellors of MUBAS (Associate Prof. Nancy Chitera) and KUHeS (Prof. Mac Mallewa)
5. Vice Chancellor of MUST (Prof Address Malata)\
6. Former Acting Vice Chancellor of UNIMA (Prof. Al Mtenje)
7. All senior government officials here present
8. Mrs. Mary Wasiri, Acting Registrar, University of Malawi
9. Senior members of Management from other universities
10. Professors, Deans, Directors and Heads of Departments
11. All members of staff of the University of Malawi
12. Reverend Patrick M'banga, the officiating Clergy
13. Honourable Bester Awali, Member of Parliament for Zomba Central Constituency
14. His Worship Councilor Davie Maunde, Mayor for Zomba City;
15. Mr. Fred Namkuyu, Acting Chief Executive Officer for Zomba City Council
16. Dr Smart Gwedemula, District Commissioner for Zomba
17. President of the University of Malawi Students Representative Council
18. Distinguished Invited Guests,
19. Parents and Guardians

20. Graduands and students
21. Members of the media
22. Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of the University of Malawi Community, I am greatly honored to welcome you all to the 1st Graduation Ceremony of the University in 2022 which is the 2nd ceremony since the University attained its new status of a standalone university.

Let me also join the Chairman of the University of Malawi Council, **Dr. George Partridge**, in welcoming the Director of Higher Education who is representing the Minister of Education.

Distinguished invited guests

Before I go any further with my remarks, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to **His Excellency, Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera, President of the Republic of Malawi** and the **Chancellor of the University of Malawi**, for delegating me to preside over this congregation.

Over many years I have attended graduation ceremonies, and performed many different roles previously as Vice Principal and Acting Principal respectively, but I never delivered an occasional address of this kind until now, so I feel very privileged.

This is my maiden graduation, the first to preside over, after the Chancellor through Council of the University appointed me to be the first Vice Chancellor of the re-established University of Malawi.

Therefore, it is such a great honour and privilege to represent His Excellency, the Chancellor on this wonderful occasion.

On that note, I pledge my commitment to the ideals and beliefs of University, the Council, the Senate and the entire University Community to achieve the excellence that this university has been over the decades known for.

Honourable Deputy Minister, (Invited guests, ladies and gentlemen)

The University of Malawi will significantly contribute towards the attainment and realization of the MW2063 and its first 10-year implementation plan (MIP-1). As we move forward,

- i. we will be expanding our online, distance and E-learning programmes;
- ii. We will be constructing hostels for our students who are currently around 8000 against 1200 bed-space.

- iii. Our strategic direction is to increase enrollment to 15000 by 2026
- iv. We will be expanding the teaching and learning space through several initiatives including the Skills for A Vibrant Economy (SAVE) project
- v. We will be creating conducive environment for students with special needs.
- vi. We will be introducing new programmes and increase our research profile in our schools.
- vii. We will be increasing staff portfolio to PhD and professorial levels;
- viii. We will be reducing our dependence on government by enhancing our resource mobilization initiatives;
- ix. And we will also be promoting our international visibility.

Invited Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Graduation ceremonies all over the world have always been recognized and celebrated as joyful occasions not only by those who are receiving their awards, but by their families, friends (including boyfriends and girlfriends known as Promise To Marry's (PTMs) in our times), relatives and others as well. This function today is no different. We have all gathered here to join our successful graduands who will soon transition from the world of being students who are cared for by others, to that of mature and responsible adults and citizens who are ready to join millions of Malawians in shaping the destiny of our beautiful country.

I would, therefore, like to ask all of you to join me in congratulating our graduands on their success. This achievement is a well-deserved one. It did not come by chance or mistake. No one from the University of Malawi gets their qualification on a silver platter. It is earned through hard work, dedication and a high level of commitment to the academic standards demanded by the institution.

Ladies and gentlemen

These products of our University, who are colourfully dressed, as you can see by yourselves, will be the first ones to testify to their hard work. They spent sleepless nights in the library, the labs, the classrooms and even in their rooms working very hard to do well in their assignments and examinations. Yes, they surely did and therefore, they deserve a loud applause for their achievements.

Distinguished Guests

Some of you might have noted that the University of Malawi is undergoing a facelift of its infrastructure across the campus. We would like to thank our **Chancellor, His Excellency the President of the Republic of Malawi** for the special

attention he gives to developments taking place at the University of Malawi and the new sister Universities of MUBAS and KUHeS.

We would like also to record our appreciation to the **Minister of Education** for her immerse interest in higher education.

Ladies and Gentlemen

As it was the case last time, the University of Malawi is graduating students not only from UNIMA but also from the former colleges which are now independent; namely; MUBAS and KUHeS. What is even more exciting is the excellent partnership which the three new universities continue to enjoy amongst themselves.

Allow me, at this point in time, to provide brief highlights and statistics about the candidates who are graduating today.

SUMMARY STATISTICS

	Male	Female	TOTAL
Certificate	3	7	10
Diplomas	8	34	40
Bachelors	526	709	1235
Postgraduate Diplomas	6	5	11
Masters	87	47	134
PhDs	6	2	8
TOTAL	636	804	1440

We have 1440 graduands for both the morning and the afternoon graduation ceremonies.

In terms of statistical distribution of graduands, we have 10 certificates, 42 Diplomas, 1235 bachelors, 11 Postgraduate Diplomas, 134 Masters and 8 PhDs.

In terms of gender parity, the overall statistics shows that there is a very narrow gap between males and females who will be graduating today. In fact, overall, there are more females (**804**) graduating today than males (**636**). This signals the

university's efforts towards achieving a 50-50 gender distribution with regard to opportunities for higher education in compliance with the national policy on gender equity.

I WOULD LIKE TO TALK ABOUT CURRENT ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

Normally the Vice Chancellor's Address on this occasion provides a status report of events at the University. The Chairman has highlighted some of the major policy developments that have taken place since our last graduation on 8 December 2021.

Four months down the line, there is so much that has happened and not everything can be reported within the short time available for my remarks *because of the tight schedule that we have. As you know we have two sessions to be held back to back.*

I will therefore just briefly summarise them:

1. Through the Faculty of Science, we have won project funding for the establishment of a Centre for Resilient Agri-food systems (CRAFS) through World Bank funding to a tune of about 6 million USD within the African Centers of Excellence phase 2 initiative (ACE2). The overall objective is to strengthen research capacity and capabilities in Malawi and Mozambique to make it possible to carry out impactful research that leads to resilient agri-food systems grounded in science and technology.
2. NORPART II –DEDICATED project funded by the Norwegian Government to the tune of about 6 Million Norwegian Kroners (about MK500 Million) which runs between January 2022 and 2026. The project is meant to strengthen institutional research capacity in computer and ICT. The project will also provide further opportunities for staff and student exchange.
3. We have submitted through Government a concept to Bridgin Foundation on Establishment of Science and Innovations Development Centre (SIDC) to a tune of 580 Million USD (for 20 years). The outputs of the concept include; Construction of an industrial site and laboratories and ancillary services such as accommodation facilities; Soft-ware engineering and development, among others;
4. The University in collaboration with Magomero College and Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare secured funding

amounting to \$1 million for the training of social workers at certificate, diploma and degree levels. The project is funded by USAID and will run for five years. University of Malawi is the Prime Partner and the students have already completed their first intensive face-to-face classes.

5. A project on "Strengthening the Cultural and Creative Industries in Malawi" funded by ACP-EU Culture Programme (through the Sound Connects Fund) which targets creative industries in African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. The project runs until 2023. It aims to offer professional development training and a creative entrepreneurship incubator programme for artists with no previous formal training.
6. We have a project on 'Developing an Umunthu Education Framework for Antidoping in Malawi': Funded by the Anti-Doping Agency, this project works with sports personalities and aims to develop locally anchored solutions to the problem of doping in sports.
7. The University is currently involved in Instructional Leadership and Management Training for Malawi Community Day Secondary Schools' head teachers and deputy head teachers for the support of the Teaching of Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program. This is a component of the Equity with Quality and Learning at Secondary (EQUALS) Project.
8. We secured funding from the Norwegian Programme for Capacity Development in Higher Education (NORHED II) to support the implementation of a collaborative teaching and research project involving 4 Universities, namely: The University of Malawi, the University of Zimbabwe, the University of Nairobi (Kenya) and the University of Oslo (Norway). The grant focuses on "Women's, Children's and Nature's Rights in Environmental Governance." The University of Malawi will receive the sum of US\$ 600,000 (MK487 million) out of the project grant. The project will run from 2022-2026. Under the project, the partner Universities intend to roll out a regional master's degree in Women's, Children's and Nature's rights in Environmental Governance and undertake various research and publication activities.
9. We are building the foundations to enhance our research portfolio. We established the University of Malawi Research Fund, (UNIMAREF) in February this year with the aim of promoting research and grants seeking, especially among upcoming researchers. Already, four academic members of staff have benefited from the Scheme and the second call for application will be sent out this week. Currently the resources financing the initiative are from our own generated funds, especially through the University of Malawi Research Ethics Committee (UNIMAREC).

In terms of Current Collaborations:

The University has signed many Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) in the past 6 months to improve our service delivery and ensure quality education. These include:

1. Agreement with Ministry of Labour on the provision of space at Mzuzu Trade Testing Centre for Open, distance and E-learning
2. Student mobility agreement with VID Specialised University and the University of Western Cape
3. Agreement between our Radio and different partners such Farm Radio Trust, WAN-IFRA women in news; Ministry of Agriculture; Advancing Girls in Africa on Phindu mu Ulimi wa Nsoma radio programme.
4. Bursary Grant Contract agreement between LEADSEA and ourselves
5. We have established a new partnership under the ongoing Erasmus+ Programme KA107, UNIMA is involved in staff and students exchange with the Friedrik-Alexander University (FAU) in Germany.

IMMEDIATE OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Infrastructure Development:

- Thanks to the Government, we have had massive infrastructural developments recently; however, due to our vision of increasing students' enrollment from 8000 to 15000, we need more classrooms and laboratories with associated facilities. Through the Skills for a Vibrant Economy (SAVE) project we will be constructing a teaching and learning complex for seating capacity of 1,800 students.
- Our hostels cater for only 1200 students against the student population of 8000. We have undertaken several initiatives and continue to do so through the Private Public Partnership arrangements, and other potential partners to construct students' accommodation facilities.

As I wind up: A special note to our Graduands:

Your families, guardians, friends and teachers have done their job to shape your minds. All the hard work you put in your studies and the knowledge you acquired have trained you for what is to come.

As Nora Ephron said, *"Your education is a dress rehearsal for a life that is yours to lead"*

We expect you to use your qualifications and training to contribute towards changing the world into a better one. This country needs highly qualified human capital in order to achieve success. For the nation to realize the MW 2063 vision of being an ***Inclusively Wealthy and Self-reliant Nation***, it will require people like you to be part of the equation. You should, therefore, consider yourselves as critical players on this long journey towards the attainment of this ideal.

Director of Ceremonies

Finally, let me thank the organizing committee for this wonderful and well-organized congregation. This shows how meticulous you were in your planning. You have done a commendable job.

I thank you all for your attention and May the almighty God bless our University and our country, Malawi.