

**Commencement Speech by Prof. Nicholas Ozor, Executive Director,
African Technology Policy Studies Network**

*Theme of the commencement speech; Knowledge with purpose and service with
integrity*

Your Excellency, the Guest of Honour, the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, **Maama Janet Kataaha Museveni**, represented by the Hon. Joyce Moriku Kaducu, Minister of State for Primary Education;

The Chancellor of Makerere University, Dr. Crispus Kiyonga;
The Chairperson and Members of the University Council;
The Vice Chancellor, Professor Barnabas Nawangwe, and members of University Management;
Distinguished guests;
Esteemed faculty and staff;
Proud parents, guardians, families and friends;
And above all, the graduates of Makerere University

I greet you all.

Today, we gather on these historic academic grounds of Makerere University – the oldest university in Uganda and East Africa – a beacon of scholarship in Africa and a home of thinkers, reformers, innovators, and leaders.

From these halls have emerged presidents, jurists, scientists, educators, technologists, and agricultural pioneers whose ideas have shaped not only Uganda, but the continent and the world. Among those who studied here are former Presidents such as **Julius Nyerere, Mwai Kibaki, Milton Obote, Benjamin Mkapa, and Joseph Kabila.**

Others who have received honorary doctorates and academic recognition include **Yoweri Museveni, Edward Mutesa II, and Paul Kagame.**

Graduates, today you join this storied legacy of a great citadel of learning.

Today is your day.
A day of celebration, reflection, and transition.

It marks the end of one chapter and the beginning of another – one that demands knowledge, courage, creativity, integrity, and service.

This moment did not come cheaply. It was earned through late nights, failed attempts, financial strain, resilience, and persistence. Today we celebrate your achievement – but even more, we recognize your responsibility.

A degree is not a finish line.
Graduation is not the end of learning.
It is the beginning of accountability.

The world you are entering is complex – fast-changing and deeply unequal. Climate change threatens livelihoods. Technology disrupts economies. Education systems are under pressure. Justice systems are tested. Food insecurity persists. Misinformation spreads faster than truth.

Into this world, you step – armed with knowledge, credentials, and potential.

Your degrees do not make you better than others. They make you responsible for others.

That is why I chose the theme of this address:
Knowledge with Purpose, Service with Integrity.

To the School of Law

You are trained in the language of justice – constitutions, rights, procedures, and power.

But remember: the law is not merely a profession. It is a moral calling.

Uganda, Africa, and the world do not need lawyers who only know how to argue. They need lawyers who know why they argue.

- Use the law to protect the weak, not intimidate them.
- Use your knowledge to defend justice, not delay it.
- Let integrity define your reputation – not merely your résumé.

There will be moments when shortcuts will be tempting and silence will feel safer than truth. In those moments, remember: justice does not need clever people. It needs courageous ones.

To the College of Education and External Studies

You are custodians of the future.

Every nation rises and falls on the quality of its teachers. You will shape minds long before policies do. You will influence values long before laws are enforced.

- Never underestimate the power of a classroom.
- Teach not only for examinations, but for understanding.
- Teach not only content, but character.
- Teach learners how to think – not what to think.

Education is quiet work – but its impact echoes across generations.

To the College of Computing and Information Sciences

You are architects of the digital age. You speak the language of algorithms, data, artificial intelligence, and innovation.

But hear this clearly: technology is powerful, but it is not neutral.

Every line of code carries values. Every system you design affects real lives.

Use technology to solve African problems – not merely to imitate foreign solutions.

Build for inclusion. Build for accessibility. Build for truth.

- Do not let innovation outrun ethics.
- The future will not belong to those who know the most technology, but to those who use it wisely.

I also take this opportunity to inform you that the **African Technology Policy Studies Network** is currently offering PhD scholarships and postdoctoral fellowships in Artificial Intelligence. We look forward to further engagement with Makerere University so that the institution may benefit from this programme.

To the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

You stand at the intersection of survival and sustainability.

In a world facing climate change, food insecurity, and environmental degradation, your knowledge is essential.

You will work with farmers, ecosystems, land, water, and policy. You will shape food systems and livelihoods.

- Respect indigenous knowledge.
- Embrace scientific innovation.
- Champion sustainability – not as a slogan, but as a way of life.

The future of Africa depends on how well we feed our people and protect our land.

Lessons for All Graduates

Beyond your disciplines, character will outlive your certificate.

- Your integrity will open doors your degree cannot.
- Your humility will teach you lessons success never will.
- Your resilience will matter more than your grades.

You will fail at times. Let failure refine you – not define you.

Remember these five principles:

1. **Embrace lifelong learning.** The world changes too fast for static knowledge.
2. **Choose purpose over comfort.** Impact matters more than income.
3. **Build character before career.** Skills get you hired; character sustains you.
4. **Serve something larger than yourself.** Give back to your communities and your country.
5. **Believe in Africa – and act.** Do not wait for solutions from elsewhere. Be the solution.

To the Parents and Guardians

Today, you graduate too. Your sacrifices – financial, emotional, spiritual – are written into every certificate awarded.

Thank you for believing when it was difficult, for supporting when it was inconvenient, and for hoping when the future seemed uncertain.

Graduates, you are not graduating into comfort. You are graduating into purpose.

Uganda needs leaders who serve.

Africa needs thinkers who act.

The world needs graduates who care.

The vision of **African Union** Agenda 2063 – *The Africa We Want* – calls for a prosperous and peaceful continent driven by its own citizens. You are those citizens.

Do not wait to be perfect before you contribute.
Start where you are. Use what you have.

Wherever life takes you – government, private sector, civil society, academia, entrepreneurship – carry Makerere with you.

Carry excellence.

Carry courage.

Carry responsibility.

In conclusion, graduates of Makerere University, you have been taught.
You have been tested. You have been trusted with knowledge.

- Now go and build.
- Build justice.
- Build minds.
- Build systems.
- Build sustainable futures.

May your work honor your families.

May your lives honor your nation.

May your legacy honor this great institution.

Congratulations, Class of 2026.

The future awaits you – and it is watching.

Thank you very much.