

MAKERERE



UNIVERSITY

**SPEECH BY THE VICE CHANCELLOR, PROF. BARNABAS
NAWANGWE AT THE 76TH GRADUATION CEREMONY
ON 24TH FEBRUARY 2026**

- **Our Guest of Honour, The First Lady and Minister of Education and Sport, Hon. Janet Kataaha Museveni, represented by the Hon. Joyce Kaducu, Minister of State for Primary Education;**
- **The Chancellor of Makerere University, Hon. Dr. Crispus Kiyonga;**
- **Hon. Ministers;**
- **Members of the Judicature;**
- **Members of the Diplomatic Corps,**
- **Hon. Members of Parliament;**
- **Religious Leaders;**
- **The Chairperson of the University Council, Dr. Lorna Magara;**
- **Members of Council;**
- **Our Commencement Speaker, Prof. Nicholas Ozor;**
- **My Colleagues the Vice Chancellors, Rectors and Principals of sister institutions;**
- **The Deputy Vice Chancellors, Principals, Deans and Members of Management;**
- **Members of Senate;**
- **Members of Staff of Makerere University;**
- **The Guild President;**
- **The Chairman of Convocation;**
- **Graduands;**
- **Parents, Guardians and Sponsors;**
- **The Media;**
- **Invited Guests; Ladies and Gentlemen!**

Welcome Remarks

I warmly welcome you all to the 76th graduation ceremony of Makerere University. In a special way, I welcome our Chief Guest, the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, represented by the Hon. Joyce Kaducu. In the same vein, I welcome our special guest and commencement speaker, Prof. Nicholas Ozor, the Executive Director of the African Technology Policy Studies Network, based in Nairobi. Similarly, I welcome our special guests from Michigan State University, Dr. Jose Maleta and Dr. Amy Jamison, co-directors of the AAP, who are here for the launch of the Africa Office of the Alliance for African Partnerships, a consortium of ten African universities and institutions, and Michigan State University. Welcome!

I wish to congratulate H.E. the President of the Republic of Uganda and Visitor of Makerere University, Yoweri Kaguta Museveni, on his re-election with a landslide. We are confident that with your renewed mandate, Higher Education will continue to thrive and make its expected contribution to the transformation of our Country even more impactful.

I also congratulate you, our Chancellor, Dr. Crispus Kiyonga on your election as Member of Parliament for Bukonzo East; the Chairperson of the Finance, Planning, Administration and Investment Committee of Council, Mr. Bruce Kabaasa on your election as Member of Parliament for Rubanda West, as well as other former members of staff, guild presidents and other alumni who emerged victorious in the recently concluded elections for various elective positions. We are immensely proud of you and wish you every success as you take on this renewed service to our country. I take this opportunity to congratulate the Chairperson of Council, Dr. Lorna Magara

on completing her Doctor of Education degree from Regent University, Virginia, USA. You have led the Council with distinction and we wish you all the best as you continue to serve Makerere and Uganda.

I congratulate our graduands, parents, guardians, sponsors and members of staff especially those graduating today, on reaching this important milestone.

Governance

Appointment of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic Affairs)

Hon. Minister, Chancellor, Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to congratulate Prof. Sarah Ssali, upon her appointment as the Deputy Vice Chancellor in charge of Academic Affairs. Prof. Ssali, the second woman to occupy this position in the history of Makerere University, has had a distinguished career at Makerere University spanning over two decades. Until her appointment, she was the Acting Director of the Institute of Gender and Development Studies (IGDS), having previously served as Dean of the School of Women and Gender Studies (2017-2024). She is also the Director of the Centre of Excellence in African Identities under the African Research Universities Alliance (ARUA).

Prof. Ssali is a Professor of Gender and Development Studies and a prolific researcher with more than 50 peer-reviewed publications, several book chapters, and edited volumes to her name. Her research focuses on public policy, institutions, social transformation, gender, global health, health systems, and identity studies.

Beyond academia, she has contributed significantly to university governance, serving on Makerere University Council since 2010, the

Appointments Board, and as Chair of several Council committees including Quality Assurance, Gender Mainstreaming and ICT. She has also played a leading role in curriculum reviews and policy reforms across the University.

I congratulate Prof. Ssali on her appointment and look forward to her leadership in steering the academic affairs of Makerere to greater heights.

1. Graduation Statistics

Mr. Chancellor Sir, during the course of the 76th graduation ceremony, I will present to you a total of **9,295** graduands who will receive degrees and diplomas of Makerere University. Of these, **4,262 (46%) are female** and **5,033 (54%) are male**. A total of **213** graduands will graduate with PhDs, the highest number in the history of the University; **2,503** with Masters degrees; **6,343** with Bachelor's degrees; **206** with postgraduate diplomas **and 30** with Diplomas.

Graduands of postgraduate awards constitute **31.4%** of the total number of graduands. This is indeed historical and in line with our strategic direction of a research-led and research-intensive University. The best undergraduate graduand from the sciences, graduating with a CGPA of **4.77** in the Bachelor of Agricultural and Rural Innovation is Esther Ziribaggwa. This year, we have 2 students from Bachelors in Procurement and Supply Chain Management, who emerged as best students in the humanities; Ms. Sarah Aloyo and Ms. Nakato Dorothy are both graduating with a CGPA of **4.93**. I congratulate them.

Beginning with this 76th graduation ceremony, we will recognize the best performing PhD students, who are members of staff. I congratulate the members of staff who completed their PhDs in record time without even

taking leave from their duties. These include Mugisha Arthur (CEES), Ainomugisha Safiki (CEDAT), as well as Mbabazi Lillian, Mbabazi Pamela Byakwaga, Mutuzo Irene Esther, Tushabomwe Dennis, and Tushemerirwe Abius, all from CHUSS. Thank you for your exemplary leadership. These will get the Makerere PhD Resilience Award. Similarly, starting with the 76th Graduation Ceremony, we will recognise the best PhD and Masters theses as selected by the Higher Degrees Committee of Senate. The best ten theses at this graduation include the following:

S/N	Names	Course	College
1	Kawesi Paul	MA Law	SoL
2	Katende Stephen	MSc. QE	COBAMS
3	Najjinda Shamirah	PhD Management	COBAMS
4	Turyahabwe Irene	MSc. Molecular Biology	COVAB
5	Tayebwa Dickson	PhD	COVAB
6	Batte Herbert	PhD Mathematics	CONAS
7	Ssekago Arnold	MSc. Mathematics	CONAS
8	Namiyingo Julian	PhD Lit	CHUSS
9	Namata Brenda	MSCO	CHUSS
10	Tayebwa Asaph Kamau	MBA	MUBS

I congratulate all our graduands upon reaching this milestone. In a special way I congratulate the members of staff, ministers, and members of parliament that are graduating today as well as children and spouses of members of staff.

Mr. Chancellor Sir, today I will present to you graduands from the College of Education and External Studies; the College of Computing and Information Sciences; the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences; and the School of Law.

Allow me to highlight some of the achievements by these Colleges.

a) College of Education and External Studies

i. Championing the digital transformation of Makerere University.

The College of Education and External Studies continues to play a pivotal role in Makerere University's digital and pedagogical transformation by **Championing the digital transformation of Makerere University.**

In pursuit of digital transformation, Makerere University institutionalised the Institute of Open, Distance, and eLearning effective January 1, 2025.

The College of Education and External Studies through the Institute of Open, Distance, and eLearning, in collaboration with the College of Engineering, Design, Art and Technology (CEDAT), is implementing a KOICA-funded project aimed at enhancing the distance education environment at Makerere University. This project has led to the development and approval of a 10-year Distance Education Master Plan (2025-2035). Additionally, the project involves constructing a four-storey Open, Distance, and eLearning Centre, and building the capacity of university faculty in multimedia e-Content production.

Makerere University is also working with the Mastercard Foundation to finalize the development of Phase II of the eLearning Initiative, having successfully completed Phase I. These efforts demonstrate Makerere University's commitment to integrating online learning programs with traditional face-to-face programs. It is our conviction that Open, Distance and e-Learning hold the future of access to higher education for thousands of young people, and Makerere is taking the lead.

ii. Championing Competence-Based Education in Africa



In line with its mandate, the College of Education and External Studies is providing leadership to institutionalize Competence-Based Education in Africa. In 2025, the College of Education and External Studies coordinated eight other partner institutions and secured a prestigious € 1 million ERASMUS+ grant to champion institutionalization of Competence-Based Education in East and West Africa, positioning Makerere as a continental leader in innovative higher education reform.

Through the Transitioning Higher Education Regulators and Universities to Competence Based Education in East and West Africa (TRUCE initiative), the College is working closely with regulatory agencies, partner universities, and industry to embed assessment, digital integration, and capacity building to support staff to shift teaching from content transmission to demonstrable learner competencies aligned with societal and labour-market needs.

b) College of Computing and Information Sciences

The **College of Computing and Information Sciences** continues to show how innovation, research excellence, and student empowerment can be used to solve national issues and position our university as a global leader in knowledge and innovations.

i. Advancing Artificial Intelligence for Health and Indigenous Knowledge

The college made its mark on the continental stage through an AI-driven digital health solution developed by one of its finalists. At the Africa Innovation Fellowship bootcamp in Johannesburg, a Computer Science student won the Best Pitch Award for Floral Intel, an artificial intelligence

platform focused on medicinal plants and health education. Using computer vision and machine learning, the platform identifies medicinal plants while connecting users to certified herbalists. By digitalizing indigenous knowledge traditionally passed down orally, the innovation bridges the gap between traditional medicine and modern healthcare systems.

Plans are underway to scale the solution into a mobile application, expand it across Africa, and collaborate with institutions such as the National Drug Authority and the Uganda Registration Services Bureau to ensure credibility and trust.

ii. Support Excellence in Education, Research and Innovation through the Endowment Fund

In August 2025, CoCIS took a bold and visionary step by launching a permanent Endowment Fund to support excellence in education, research, and innovation. This initiative was designed to provide sustainable resources for student scholarships, strengthen research capacity, and enable continued investment in cutting-edge technological infrastructure. It responds to the growing number of academically gifted students who face financial constraints, while also nurturing early-career researchers whose work drives innovation. By reinvesting proceeds from successful research grants, the College has established a self-sustaining model that links scholarly productivity to institutional growth.

c. College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

In 2025, the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) continued to lead vital initiatives focused on driving sustainable change in Africa's food systems. Some of these initiatives include;

i. Combating Child Malnutrition in the Face of Climate Change with the Mak-CAES Healthy Soy Initiative:

Climate change is worsening food insecurity, and children are among the most vulnerable. Their growth depends on consistent access to high-quality nutrients, yet many face malnutrition. Women, often both the food producers and caregivers, are also disproportionately affected. These gendered and generational inequalities are deepening as food systems falter under environmental stress. In response, researchers from CAES led by Prof. Phinehas Tukamuhabwa, in collaboration with partners from other countries launched the “Healthy Soy” initiative in August 2025. This initiative aims to develop sustainable, affordable, and nutritious soy-based foods to combat child stunting in Uganda and other climate-affected regions. We appreciate the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for funding this research.

ii. Boosting Uganda’s Cocoa Industry Through Innovative Technology and Value Addition

CAES continues to address challenges facing Uganda’s major export commodities. Cocoa, a priority export crop, and its value addition are emphasized in the National Development Plan IV (NDP IV). Prof. Archileo Kaaya of the Department of Food Technology & Nutrition, serving as Principal Investigator (PI), led research on “Up-scaling the Uptake of Cocoa Innovative Technologies for Enhanced Value Addition During Primary Processing”.

The project was funded by the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) through the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology

(September 2023 – September 2025). The project developed and scaled up the use of a cocoa single fermentation box to improve bean quality. Over 70% of farmers across Uganda’s major cocoa-producing districts have adopted this technology.

d. SCHOOL OF LAW

The School of Law continues to distinguish itself as a centre of academic excellence in legal education and training not only in Uganda but also in the greater Eastern Africa region. In the 2025 pre-entry examinations for the Law Development Centre post-graduate diploma in Legal Practice program, 94% of our students who sat the exams, passed and were admitted. This performance reflects not only the intellectual calibre of our students, but also the School’s rigorous curriculum and committed faculty that prepare our students for exceptional performance in legal practice.

I congratulate the Makerere University School of Law mooting team that recently emerged winners in the national rounds of the Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition. The team will represent Uganda at the global competition in Washington latter this year. The Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition is the world’s largest and most prestigious moot court contest. Our students’ performance show both excellent advocacy skills, and deep analytical skills in public international law and teamwork. This accomplishment reinforces the School’s growing reputation as a leader in mooting, legal research and legal scholarship. Another team from the School of Law participated and emerged 1st runners up in the Boston International Innovation Moot held from 6th to 8th February 2026. Because of their exceptional performance, they were awarded the Inaugural Pauline Ndirangu Willem C. Vis Moot in Austria in April 2026. I congratulate the School on these achievements.



Research, Innovation and Outreach

As we celebrate the academic achievements of our students today, we also reaffirm the enduring promise of Makerere University that research, innovations, and knowledge must serve society. To fulfill that promise, Makerere is steadily advancing toward becoming a truly research-led university, generating knowledge that drives communities, strengthens industries, and advances national transformation.

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Uganda for entrusting Makerere with critical resources to support more than 1,400 high-impact research and innovation projects through the Makerere University Research and Innovations Fund (Mak-RIF). This Fund has empowered our researchers and innovators to deepen the University's contribution to national development priorities by creating practical and innovative solutions to everyday challenges.

For example, Makerere has provided the Government with evidence-based policy recommendations to address challenges in the land sector, energy and minerals sector, and in peace and security and the education sector.

Through Mak-RIF, the Government has also supported more than 200 PhD students, enabling them to conduct their research and overcome funding barriers. I am proud to note that many of the beneficiaries of this PhD support are among those graduating during this ceremony.

Makerere University Technology and Innovations Centre

The Makerere University Technology and Innovations Centre (MUTIC) continues to play a pivotal role in advancing the University's incubation

and commercialisation agenda. As a catalyst for innovation, the Centre provides structured support to students, staff, and researchers to transform ideas, research outputs, and prototypes into viable enterprises and market-ready solutions.

Through mentorship, business development training, intellectual property support, product development guidance, and access to industry linkages, MUTIC has strengthened the entrepreneurial ecosystem at Makerere. To date, eleven (11) spin-off companies have been established by students and staff members, translating university-based research and innovation into impactful businesses that create jobs and contribute to national development. In addition, the University's Innovation Pod (UniPod) has incubated over 100 projects in the last one year. Our target is to spin-off 50 companies every year in the short term and double that number in the long term.

Recognition of the Best Researchers and Teachers

Today, we will recognize and award researchers whose scholarly contributions and publication records exemplify academic distinction. These awards recognize sustained excellence in research productivity, impactful publications, and contributions to knowledge that advance both national and global discourse. Through this structured procedure, Makerere continues to strengthen a culture of integrity, accountability, and research excellence.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In addition to celebrating research excellence, and in partnership with the Science, Technology and Innovation Secretariat, Office of the President, we



shall also recognize innovation and commercialization through the Innovation Commercialization Award. This award underscores Makerere University's strategic focus on linking scholarship with industry, policy, and community needs. It reflects our commitment to ensuring that research does not remain confined to journals and laboratories but is translated into products, services, technologies, and processes that address real-world challenges.

These awards are part of our broader efforts to position Makerere University as a truly research-led institution. We are committed to encouraging our staff to publish in high-impact journals, to produce innovations with societal relevance, and to engage in scholarship aligned with national and regional development priorities.

Allow me to sincerely appreciate the Science, Technology and Innovation Secretariat – Office of the President, for its strategic leadership in Uganda's innovation agenda. Your partnership reinforces the national commitment to science, technology, and knowledge-driven development.

To our award recipients, I congratulate you most sincerely. Your dedication inspires us all.

Digitalisation

Digitalisation is the cornerstone of our professionalisation agenda. Our Directorate of ICT Support has done a lot to enable us realise one of our key strategic goals, a professionally managed institution. We are now able to perform most administrative functions online. The university processes that were digitalised during the year 2025 include:

- The Public Universities Joint Admissions process (PUJAB) which is now entirely managed online through ACMIS. This has enhanced efficiency and slashed admissions budget by more than half.
- Housing allocation for staff and students residing at university halls of residences.
- Automation of student attendance which has enhanced accountability of lecture attendance by both students and lecturers.
- Digital transcript certification.
- Procurement management.
- Grants Management.
- Health Management.

The automation of these business processes has enabled us to considerably improve service delivery. The integration of all the management information systems is ongoing and, once completed, the Integrated Management Information System will make the management of the University much more efficient and customer friendly.

University Ranking

Makerere's ranking on all global university ranking platforms has remained stable, placing Makerere among the top 10 African universities and within the top 4.5% globally. In the Times Higher Education global ranking, Makerere University made a formidable jump from the 1200-1500 bracket to the 800-1000 band out of more than 25,000 universities worldwide that participated in the ranking. This was no mean achievement and I congratulate all members of the Makerere Community on this stellar performance.

Infrastructure Development

Mr. Chancellor, Sir, Hon. Minister, we made great strides in infrastructure development and for this we greatly appreciate government's commitment to funding these development projects. The renovation of Mary Stuart Hall and the construction of the Makerere Arena were completed. We would like to greatly appreciate our Minister and the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development for this support.

We thank the Government for securing a loan of USD 162 million from the Korea Exim Bank for infrastructure development of Makerere University. This is unprecedented in Makerere's history. The loan will enable us to build a new laboratory and lecture block for the School of Medicine, new buildings for the School of Dentistry, School of Engineering, a new building to house the Science and Technology Centre, and completion of the School of Computing and Information Sciences.

Also, important to note is that with a grant from the Government of South Korea, construction of the E-Learning Building has commenced. On completion, the facility will greatly enhance the University's capacity to offer distance and online education in the various disciplines. Furthermore, the construction of the first phase of the Makerere University Sports Complex, including a 20,000-seater stadium at the main sports grounds, fully funded by the Government of Uganda has commenced. The Government has also allocated us funds to begin the construction of the Public Infrastructure Management Centre, which will greatly improve public infrastructure procurement in Uganda. We have also partnered with the National Building Review Board to construct the National Building Research Centre. On completion, these mega projects will greatly transform Makerere University

and enable us to more meaningfully build for the future as dictated by Makerere's motto. Makerere will never be the same again. I thank Kiira Motors Corporation for the donation of a specialized electric bus to ease the movement of our students and staff with physical disability on campus. KMC has also installed a fast-charging station on campus.

Appreciation of our Partners

The success and continued growth of Makerere University would not have been possible without the steadfast support of Government and our valued development partners.

Mr. Chancellor, Sir, I am pleased to report that Makerere University has continued to strengthen and expand strategic partnerships, including our growing collaboration with the Government of the Republic of Korea, among others. These partnerships are enhancing our capacity in research, innovation, infrastructure development, and human capital formation.

I wish to extend our sincere appreciation to the many stakeholders who provide research grants and scholarships, enabling bright but economically disadvantaged students to access quality education at Makerere University. These include the Mastercard Foundation, the European Union, NORAD, Sida, IDRC, KOICA, DAAD, NIH, CDC, USAID, the Wellcome Trust, KfW, IUCEA, RUFORUM, ARUA, the PLUS Alliance, WUN, AAUN, AAP, the Madhvani Foundation, and the Government of Uganda through the Higher Education Students Financing Board. We are equally grateful to the Embassy of China, the Chinese Chamber of Commerce, various Government Ministries, State House, the private sector including banks (Stanbic, Absa, NCBA, DFCU, Centenary and others), and many other local and international partners whose generous support continues to advance

our mission. To all our partners, we convey our profound gratitude for walking this journey with us as we shape the future of our nation and continent through higher education. Special gratitude goes to the University Council, without whose guidance and support all these achievements would not have been possible.

A Word to the Graduands

And now, a word to our dear graduands. You are graduating with a degree from one of the best universities on earth and you have been wonderful students, displaying the highest standards of discipline and scholarship, and we are proud of you. You are all graduating with disciplines that are needed by society. We have equipped you with the knowledge and skills that will make you employable or create your own businesses and employ others. Do not despair if you cannot find employment, instead reflect on the immense opportunities around you and raise to the occasion as an entrepreneur. Do not despise humble beginnings. To the graduands of PhDs, you are now global science citizens. Africa expects much from you. Use your degree to transform our Continent.

In this regard, I would like to interest you in the Makerere University Careers fair scheduled for 11th – 13th March 2026, here at the University, where we are planning to have our recent graduates and current students engage with various industry partners on how to transition to the work environment. There will be opportunity to engage with potential employers, seek internship opportunities and get information on entrepreneurship trainings available.

As you leave the gates of Makerere, I urge you to always be proud of your Alma Mater and be her good ambassadors wherever you go. Go and put to



good use the knowledge you have received from one of the best universities in the World to improve yourselves, your families, your communities, your Country and humanity. Let people see you and know that you are a Makerere alumnus because of the way you carry yourself in society with dignity and integrity. Put your trust in God and honour your parents and opportunities will be opened for you. And please, Do not Forget the Gates of Makerere. Remember that learning never ends, and Makerere's gates will always be open for those that seek more knowledge. I once again congratulate you upon achieving this milestone and pray that God will continue to bless and preserve you our graduands, parents, and sponsors. And I bring you good news. We have kept our promise to our students and I am happy to report that the transcripts for all the students graduating today are ready for collection from your respective colleges. If you haven't picked yours, please do so today.

The Commencement Speaker

Finally, allow me to introduce our Commencement Speaker. Today, we are privileged to have in our midst Prof. Nicholas Ozor, the Executive Director of the African Technology Policy Studies Network Nairobi, Kenya ((ATPS). ATPS is a transdisciplinary network of researchers, policymakers, private sector and civil society actors dedicated to promoting the generation, dissemination, use, and mastery of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for Africa's development, environmental sustainability, and global inclusion. The network operates in 30 countries – 27 in Africa and three diaspora chapters in Australia, the USA, and the United Kingdom.

Prof. Nicholas Ozor holds a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture, a Master of Science in Agricultural Administration, and a PhD in International and

Rural Development and Agricultural Extension. He is a Professor of Public Policy. He holds the Wellcome Trust Award for the Best PhD Presenter in 2006 during the Development Studies Association Conference at the University of Reading, United Kingdom. He is also a Teaching Fellow and Mentor, African Climate Change Fellowship Programme.

Prof. Ozor is a member of many professional organizations and has published over 180 articles in reputable international journals, book chapters, and other multimedia. Prof. Ozor has raised over US\$ 60 million in grants to support development work in Africa. I now have the honour to invite Prof. Ozor to deliver the Commencement address.

Thank you for your attention.

Signed: _____