

**VICE CHANCELLOR'S ADDRESS AT THE OCCASION OF THE 9<sup>TH</sup> GRADUATION CEREMONY - 3<sup>RD</sup> DECEMBER 2010**

**Your Excellency the President of the Republic of Zimbabwe and Chancellor of the Midlands State University, Cde Robert Gabriel Mugabe;**

**The Governor and Resident Minister of the Midlands Province, Cde Jason Machaya;**

**The Hon, Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education, Dr I.S.G Mudenge,**

**Honourable Ministers, Members of Parliament and Members of the House of Senate here present;**

**Chairman of the Midlands State University Council, Mr Canaan Dube;**

**The Secretary for Higher and Tertiary Education, Dr Washington Mbizvo,**

**Your Worship the Mayor of the City of Gweru, Mr Tedious Chimombe;**

**Chairman of the Vungu Rural District Council, Mr Thompson Ncube;**

**Vice-Chancellors of other Universities here present;**

**The Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Midlands State University, Professor RunganoZvobgo;**

**Members of the Midlands State University Council;**

**Our Patrons and Friends of the University;**

**Midlands State University Staff;**

**Our graduands and their guests;**

**Comrades and friends**

It is indeed a distinct honor and most pleasant duty for me to be addressing you at this propitious occasion, the 9<sup>th</sup> Congregation of our graduation ceremony. We have come to the end of yet another difficult year and the presentation of our fruits, the graduands always renders me awash with joy and deep appreciation of the efforts that every determined student and member of staff exerted in order for this day to become a tangible reality. In this regard, I believe that I also speak for every parent, guardian, spouse, relative and friend when I say that the success of these shining graduands is indeed, an indicator of our solid unity of purpose, and therefore our singular pride and honour. It is in that context that I extend special greetings to you all who have gathered to share in the joy and excitement of the occasion.

Your Excellency, your personal participation at this important day on our calendar is always an awe- inspiring effort, which gives the occasion the pomp and authenticity that it deserves. We heartily welcome you to Midlands State University!

Before I come to the central reason for our august congregation today – the celebration of yet another successful academic year, allow me to stray from the event of our excitement into the harsh realities of Higher Education and Society. Of course Higher Education is a very large subject encompassing many aspects such as Knowledge (its production, management, dissemination, etc), Access, Governance, and many other aspects. My interest this morning is narrowly focused on Higher Education and its value and purpose. I am prompted to comment on this issue simply because erroneous ideas like their kith and kin, viz, superstitions, do not die easily. The case in point is that of the value ascribed to education in general and to Higher Education in particular. The Original Sin which frequently damages the image of Higher Education was committed soon after the World War II by economists in the process of developing the ‘human capital’ theory to analyse ‘the benefits of education for individuals and society’. Milton Friedman & Rose Friedman (his wife) did not see any social benefits from Higher Education beyond what accrued to the graduate himself/herself. In-fact, they accused Higher Education of likely to promote “social interest and political instability” (Bloom et al. p3). Later economists using ‘conventional rate of return analysis’ ‘found that the typical estimates of the rate of return from primary schooling were substantially higher than those for advanced schooling’. These studies had a disproportionate impact on the thinking and policies of international donor community, especially the World Bank, which then used its financial muscle to influence African governments to downgrade Higher Education in favour of primary and secondary schooling. Thus between 1985 and 2000 when this view reigned Higher Education especially in Africa suffered dislocational consequences such as severe cuts in research and teaching infrastructure and facilities and it will take us many decades to haul Higher Education systems in Africa out of the abysmal cataclysm they were plunged. In the meantime for Zimbabwe troubles piled on us in battalions as the sanctions further undermined our capacity to sustain even the little that we had achieved following our hard won independence.

The paradox, however, is that just as the Western International donor community was maliciously wreaking such sheer havoc on Higher Education in Africa and in Zimbabwe in particular, it was also a time when the world was fast transforming into “a knowledge-based

global economy with intellectual skill replacing physical capital in the search for current and future sustained growth”. (Botman, et alia). Recently even the international donor community has been forced to concede that ‘higher education is no longer a luxury; it is essential to future national, social and economic development’. (Quoted in Botman). Everybody accepts that Higher Education has value as a private and public good. As a private good, individual graduates access ‘better employment, disposable income. . .’, whilst they are likely to save and invest in their economy. In terms of public good, graduates generate higher taxes for the state, generate entrepreneurship, job creation, promote good economic and political governance, constitute a highly qualified and skilled national cadre for the civil service, private sector, the health sector, in fact the entire social and economic fabric. Research from such Research Institutes as SIRDC and the Medical Laboratories, Research Agricultural Stations feed immediately and innovatively into the productive sectors.

Your Excellency the organic link between Higher Education and knowledge societies is self-evident and it is also very clear that if we continue to neglect Higher Education we shall forever continue to lag behind the developed countries of the North. We therefore need to redouble our investment efforts in this sector and indeed we applaud the remarkable prudence and foresightedness in the current policy of Government under your visionary policy to have a University in every province in Zimbabwe. These various institutions will only be effective if they are fully integrated into the Knowledge Society, which is only the other side of the same coin called the Global Village. We shall only be able to attract and retain scholars of high calibre if, apart from offering relatively attractive packages, we can ensure they stay in touch and communicate freely and speedily with colleagues anywhere and everywhere in the country and the world. This will enable them to participate on equal basis with colleagues in the North in formulation of research paradigms, theoretical and methodological models and to enjoy the use of the latest research equipment, books and journals. (Hountondji). As leaders of Higher Education we are now working very hard to take Zimbabwe’s Higher Education into the Knowledge Society through the setting up of a National Research and Educational Network (NREN) – an agency for collaboration at national level encompassing all Higher Education institutions in the country, facilitated by high speed broadband. The project should bring the Zimbabwe NREN into the network of all NRENS in East and Southern Africa which incidentally are at very advanced functioning and operational stages. The ultimate goal is to link these regional African NRENS under UBUNTUNET ALLIANCE to the research resources of GEANT, a consortium of European NRENS.

This will guarantee that we can recruit any scholar from anywhere in the world and locate him/her at the Midlands State University/Lupane University, he/she will be as good as sitting at Yale University in terms of access to research resources and communication with colleagues in his/her research interest.

As we join the Knowledge Society by means of reliable and fast Information Communication Technologies, we do so with our eyes wide open and indeed aware that this playing field is tilted in favour of the North. Indeed the brilliant and highly perceptive African scholar, Benin Professor Paulin J. Hountondji has rightly observed that the new Knowledge Society is only a slight nuance of the traditional paradigm of the erstwhile colonial 'core-periphery' arrangement of economic exploitation. For generations the North syphoned the surplus of the South and indeed thereby accounted for much of the underdevelopment of our countries. The Knowledge Society too brings in its train more or less the same unequal arrangements which may lead to the intellectual impoverishment of Africa. I am sure like ZANU during the Liberation Struggle avoided machinations to derail the struggle by means of its vigilant slogan, 'tamba wakachenjera', 'tichatamba muKnowledge Society takachenjera'.

Now allow me to turn to the occasion of our celebration today.

As we celebrate the triumph and deserved conquests of our diligent students across the various disciplines, I wish to point out that mainly due to our own localized recession and economic downturn that we are currently recovering from as a nation, it has not been an easy road for us to travel during the year. A combination of unstinting loyalty and stubborn fortitude made it possible for us to collectively defeat a multiplicity of challenges that threatened to overwhelm us and drown our vision prematurely. We obstinately marched on and we are therefore most delighted to present to you Your Excellency a diverse total of one thousand three hundred and ninety nine men and women, awaiting to be decorated by you today. Of this graduand body, 45.92 % are women and 54.08% are men, 41.3% are from our niche Faculty of Commerce.

Your Excellency, it is my utmost pleasure to inform you that the second law school in the country and the first in post-independence Zimbabwe, our Faculty of Law has come of age with a bang. The Law Faculty opened its doors to students in 2006 and following its achievement of the rigorous standards and requirements of the Council for Legal Education

in Zimbabwe, the Bachelor of Laws Degree Programme was designated in 2007. Since that time, the Faculty has not looked back, with its students representing Zimbabwe in various regional and international moot court competitions such as International Humanitarian Law Moot Competition, World Human Rights Moot Court Competition, Jessup Moot Court Competition in Washington, and African Human Rights Moot Competition, among others. Recently, in October 2010, the fruits of five years of diligence have especially become evident when Midlands State University Law students came first in the 7<sup>th</sup> African Trade Moot Court Competition in Cape Town, South Africa. Your Excellency, in our small contribution towards buttressing the justice system in Zimbabwe, we are indeed pleased to present to you today, our pioneer cohort of first class learned men and women. It is our fervent hope that these promising lawyers will steadfastly uphold the values of integrity, self-discipline, fairness and hard work that were inculcated in them during their five long years of rigorous study at Midlands State University as well as during their Work-Related-Learning.

In tune with the progressive regional standards in the fields of Language and Communication, the Faculty of Arts introduced a Master of Arts in Applied English Linguistics whose pioneer graduands are here before you.

Your Excellency, as we churn out these graduands, we are fully aware of the need to embark on demand driven curricula, which enable our graduates not only to secure employment but also to especially be the generators of ideas that create wealth and employment, thereby revitalizing the growth and development of industry and commerce in our country. We are also aware of concerns in some quarters that a few of the graduands might fail to secure immediate employment. This limited perspective that views higher education in terms of employment only, and negates its broad effects appears as I have already elaborated to originate from the longstanding argument for and against the role of higher education in the socio-economic development of a country, which is today only a minor issue, in the broad subject of purpose and value of Higher Education and the Knowledge Society.

Your Excellency I am exceedingly pleased to inform you that through unstinting support from our political leadership in the province, captains of Industry and Commerce from all the corners of Zimbabwe, our parent Ministry, our committed Staff Members of the Fundraising Committee and last but by no means least the renowned son of Africa and former President of the Republic of Mozambique Cde Joachim Chissano, we achieved an unparalleled feat of

raising seven million and two hundred thousand dollars in both cash and pledges of cash and building materials, towards the construction of a state of the art University Library. We envisage that the library would be an interdisciplinary information and knowledge hub, which potentially serves the Province and the nation at large. The proposed library is expected to have two sections, one with physical copies and the other housing electronic resources. The electronic section would be backed up by a big broadband system, which will link the university to the rest of the world. Plans are that the broadband should increase to the magnitude of gigabytes, so that our communities will gravitate for research and other educational purposes towards the library, which will be linked to the hub in London via the UbuntuNet alliance I referred to earlier on.

As we build the rest of our campus in furtherance of the critical mission of higher education in socio-economic development, it is our sustained vision to ensure that service to our communities is guaranteed.

Finally, I humbly wish to seize this privileged opportunity to congratulate in advance, the treasured parents and guardians, cherished spouses and relatives of our graduands, esteemed friends of Midlands State University, Industry and Commerce; our parent Ministry and of course, our dear graduands, staff and Council of Midlands State University, who have tirelessly pursued their vision against formidable odds to successfully transform incredible dreams into amazing realities.

To our graduands I say, you now leave MSU with an incomparable legacy. Education is your ultimate heritage. With it you are now equipped to fight poverty and eradicate ignorance. Educated you boldly stand prepared to break free from the bondage of poverty that is crippling our African people. Go out therefore, free your people and build our beautiful nation, which is full of promise.

**CONGRATULATIONS, MAKOROKOTO, AMHLOPHE!!!**

**I THANK YOU.**