

SPEECH BY VICE CHANCELLOR, PROF. NJENGA MUNENE AT THE ZETECH UNIVERSITY 2024 GRADUATION CEREMONY

Theme: Harnessing Green Skills and Creativity for Shared Prosperity

[Salutations]

Our Chief Guest, CEO & Managing Director - Absa Bank Kenya, Mr. Abdi Mohamed,
The Chairman, Board of Trustees Zetech University, Eng. Ken Mbiuki,
Members of Board of Trustees,
The Chancellor, Zetech University, Prof. Susan Alfano Nkinyangi,
The Chairman, Zetech University Council, Mr. Hassan Mohammed,
Members of the Zetech University Council,
Members of the Zetech University Management Board,
Members of the Zetech University Senate,
Zetech University Staff,
Students, Parents and Guardians,
Distinguished Guests,
Graduands,
Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning!

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen [Introduction]

It is with immense pride and joy that I stand before you today as we celebrate the class of 2024, in this graduation-themed **“Harnessing Green Skills and Creativity for Shared Prosperity.”** This theme captures what we believe in at Zetech University—developing sustainable solutions for a prosperous future through the power of education, innovation, and entrepreneurship. As noted by the Chairman of Council

Green skills are those skills needed to adapt processes, services, and products to climate change and the environmental regulations and requirements related to it. They include the knowledge, abilities, values, and attitudes needed to live in, develop and support a sustainable and resource-efficient society.

Zetech University has nurtured these graduands to be solutions to the myriads of problems affecting humanity arising from climate change.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-To our Graduands today,

Congratulations on reaching this significant milestone in your academic journey! Today, as you don your caps and gowns, take pride in the hard work and dedication that brought you here. You are not just graduates of Zetech University; you are pioneers equipped to harness green skills and creativity for a sustainable future. Embrace the challenges ahead with courage and conviction, and let your innovative spirit guide you as you make a meaningful impact in the world.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-To our Parents and Guardians,

Your unwavering support and encouragement have been instrumental in the success of these graduates. Today is proof of your love and dedication. As you celebrate their achievements, know that your sacrifices have helped shape their futures. The values you instilled in them will continue to resonate as they embark on their next adventures. Thank you for being the backbone of their journey.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-To the Faculty and Staff,

Your commitment to excellence and passion for education have played a vital role in nurturing these bright minds. You have inspired and guided our graduates, equipping them with the skills and knowledge they need to thrive. As mentors and leaders, your influence will be felt long after they leave this graduation. Thank you for your dedication to creating an environment of innovation and learning.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen

We are honoured to have you here today to witness the celebration of our graduates' accomplishments especially our Chief guest and speaker of the day Abdi Mohammed CEO and MD of ABSA bank. Your presence underscores the importance of community and collaboration in education. Together, we can foster an environment where creativity and sustainability flourish, paving the way for a

brighter future. Thank you for supporting our graduates and for being part of this special day.

At Zetech University, our mission remains To impact society through research-driven education that integrates innovation, technology, and entrepreneurship. We believe in the transformative power of education and research to drive positive change in our communities and the world at large. Today, we celebrate not only the achievements of our graduates but also the success stories of the University as a whole, as we continue to equip these students with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

Please allow me to briefly outline some of the key initiatives and achievements we have implemented this year in line with our 2022-2031 Strategic Plan which is anchored on the 4 pillars namely Staff and Students' Experience; Partnerships and Collaborations; Technology and Sustainability.

1. Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-STAFF AND STUDENT'S EXPERIENCE

The iZet Hub continues to be a breeding ground for innovation for our students and faculty. This year, the hub has developed the Smart Pest Deterrent System, a breakthrough technology that protects farms from birds and pests. The system is made to utilise drone technology for real-time monitoring, AI-powered pest identification for accuracy, and acoustic deterrents for targeted interventions. Such innovations, by our students, ensure food security and contribute to sustainable agricultural practices—a clear demonstration of how green skills and creativity can lead to shared prosperity. This innovation has also attracted the attention of the Kenya Aviation Authority as a possible solution to the birds menace to aeroplanes engines that cost the country and the world billions of shillings in ruined aircrafts due to sucking in of birds.

In yet another innovation, two of our students developed AirSafi, an Internet of Things (IoT) innovation that monitors air quality index and provides real-time notifications to communities about pollution levels. This solution ranked third best

in the Inter-University Power Learn Project Hackathon, showcasing our rising commitment to creating technologies that serve society and promote environmental sustainability.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-Recognition by External Partners

In February, Zetech University was honoured with a USD 10,000 prize for an outstanding achievement in research and innovation by the African Telecommunication Union. We were the sole representative from East Africa and secured the first runners-up position in the 3rd Edition of the African Telecommunication Union (ATU) Innovation Challenge held in February this year, a milestone that underscores our growing reputation as a leader in technology and research.

In October 2024, Zetech University was ranked one of the best private universities in Kenya by the Times Higher Education, a milestone that we celebrate today! - a clear demonstration of the University's prowess in teaching, research and international engagement.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-Celebrating our Students' Achievements

Our students continue to excel on both local and international platforms. For the last three years 2022, 2023, 2024, our students in IT, Computer Science and Software Engineering have represented Zetech University at the World Robotics Competitions in Geneva, Singapore, and Athens respectively.

In addition, our students also emerged as first runners-up in the just concluded World Skills Kenya National Competition with an innovation in cyber security – an analyst in web and cloud platforms performing security checks to assess system vulnerabilities.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen -Experienced and Global Faculty

In growing our students and staff experience, it is with great pleasure that I introduce our new faculty member, Dr. Nyasha, who joined us earlier this year from Midlands State University in Zimbabwe. Dr. Nyasha holds a PhD in Media Studies from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in South Africa. In our commitment to preparing our students for a global market, we are excited to offer opportunities for them to engage with our visiting faculty, sharing valuable insights and best practices in the field of media. We look forward to building on this initiative in the years ahead. Additionally, we have already commenced with recruitment of international visiting faculty to support our other programs.

Our faculty has not been left out and have continued to perform exceptionally well; in the Huawei Global Competitions, Mr. Samuel Kinuthia was recognised for being the Most Valuable Instructor in Africa and also for serving as a perfect example for our students in the tech space. Mr Kinuthia stood out of the 24 top instructors in the IT field from countries across Africa.

We are also proud to recognise Dr. Benjamin Muindi and Dr. Simon Chege for winning this year's VC Research Grant worth Ksh. 1M. The topic for their research is on *"Evidence-Based Strategies and Practices Towards Promoting Adoption of AI to Transform University Education in Kenya."* This is a demonstration of our commitment to support research.

Ms. Esther Mwangi, our Director of Research and Innovation has just attended the Impact Pioneers Program in October 2024 in Stockholm Sweden, after being successfully selected as one of the 63 attendees from 1400 applicants from 22 countries.

To have a wider global reach and to support research and publications locally and internationally, we successfully launched the Zetech University Journal of Business and Technology in April this year and the 1st Issue was published in October 2024. The journal is readily accessible via our University website.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-Global Exposure through Student Exchange Programs

I'm excited to share that we have established partnerships with Christ University in India and INTI International University in Malaysia. These collaborations will enrich our academic programmes and provide our students with valuable international perspectives through staff exchange. Through these partnerships, we aim to enhance our global outreach and create more opportunities for cross-cultural learning and exchange.

This year, we also launched our first International Student Exchange Programme with Christ University in Bengaluru, India in March 2024. Our students have had the opportunity to learn from the Silicon Valley of Asia, gaining valuable insights and networks. The second cohort of this program traveled to India in September 2024, a testament to our commitment to international presence, global competitiveness and collaboration. The 3rd Cohort is scheduled to travel in March 2025 and we invite all parents who can afford to participate by supporting their sons and daughters to get this exposure at a very subsidised cost.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-International students

As we keep growing our international presence, allow me to recognise the following international students, graduating today:

- Kiyobe Chanta from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) who has been studying International Relations and Diplomacy.
- Ajah Magok from South Sudan who has been studying Accounting and Finance.
- Ali Mohamed Farah from Tanzania, who has been studying Computer Science.

Congratulations on your achievement and thank you for choosing Zetech University. Encourage more of your countrymen to come to Zetech University, learn and enjoy the Zetech experience. Currently the University has students from 10 nationalities including South Korea.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen -An all-rounded graduate

At Zetech University we continue to encourage an all-rounded student. In the sports arena, our women's football team, Zetech Sparks, and our basketball team have emerged as champions in their respective tournaments this year. These include the Eliud Owalo Basketball Tournament, where we emerged winners and the National Women's Championships in the football category. The rugby team, Zetech Oaks, clinched the Kenya Rugby Nationwide Championships, and the Kabeberi 7s Division Roundup.

Similarly, our drama club Zetech Furnace participated in the National Drama Festivals and brought home numerous trophies in creative arts.

Career Fair and Entrepreneurship Exhibitions

We continue to encourage the spirit of entrepreneurship among our students! Recently in our 2024 Career Fair, we launched the ZePreneurs, a student entrepreneurship programme, where we recognise the businesses of our students, and offer mentorship and training, business automation and financing and industrial linkages to students. This year's ZePreneurs edition saw three students win some funds to advance their businesses. We encourage parents with the capacity to contribute to this kitty to support entrepreneurial students.

Students' accommodation

In growing our accommodation facilities, I am proud to announce that the University is also in the process of constructing an ultra-modern student accommodation facility here in the Technology Park Mang'u campus. This facility will not only enhance the student's experience but will give comfort to our parents/guardians that your learner is safe and in a conducive environment.

2. Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Commitment to Community and Corporate Social Responsibility

In line with our graduation theme and our ESG principles, we are deeply committed to engaging with and supporting our communities. During the recent floods early this year, Zetech University extended a lifeline to over 150 families by providing essential items such as foodstuffs and blankets.

We also partnered with local healthcare practitioners to offer free eye clinic services to over 2,000 residents in the Weiteithie area.

In an effort to impact the society around us, we also partnered with the sub-county government of Juja and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) to educate locals on the hyena menace in the area. These efforts reflect our belief in using our resources to create a positive societal impact.

3. Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen -TECHNOLOGY

Zetech University iZET hub was admitted as an associate member of International Association of Science Parks (IASP) in September 2024. We hope to become full members by having the iZET expand to become a full fledged technology park. We are particularly proud of the Totsi USB Cables company, which was incubated here at our iZet Hub, which is now a thriving business in Kirinyaga County. We have set up state-of-the-art science laboratories to support our upcoming STEM programmes, research and innovations. We welcome all those with innovative ideas to come and work with iZET and our laboratories to move ideas to products.

In growing our continental presence, we are also proud to announce that Zetech University is now a member of the Regional Universities Forum for Capacity Building (RUFORUM). We received the membership certificate at the triennial conference in August 2024 at Windhoek, Namibia. Joining RUFORUM represents our strategic leap towards expanding our international presence and enhancing our collaborative efforts in research and education especially in smart agriculture which was talked about a little earlier.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-Technological Advancements in Education

We have continued to integrate cutting-edge technology into every aspect of learning at Zetech University. Our classrooms are equipped with smart boards, LCDs, and access to the innovation hub that offers hands-on learning experiences.

These provide the much-needed user experience that enables our students to be the fully-baked product with top notch skills and competencies that are required in the future world of work.

4. Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-SUSTAINABILITY

Research and Innovation Focus

In July, our Research and Innovation Week extensively highlighted the role of Artificial Intelligence in the Circular Economy, encouraging critical thinking about how AI can contribute to sustainability and economic growth. This event fostered creativity, and we look forward to seeing our students and faculty push the boundaries of knowledge and innovation in the years to come.

During the innovation week, the University showcased a solar-powered TukTuk, presenting a significant step towards radically improving the transport sector and reducing carbon emissions.

Other smart inventions showcased during the week included; a biometric face-recognition security technology solution that seeks to monitor and restrict unauthorised access to institutions and premises.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-Consultancy and Training

We take immense pride in our collaborations, both locally and internationally. One such partnership saw 112 South African traders from the Wholesale and Retail SETA programme receive business training from Zetech University in April; consequently the traders were graduated by Zetech University after completion in South Africa at the University of Witwatersrand.

Additionally, to grow the SME impact in our country, we launched the Inua Biashara Program in partnership with leading organisations like Safaricom and KCB Bank, among others; providing entrepreneurs with financial support, business networks, and much needed market linkages.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen-New programmes as we look to the future, we notify this congregation that we launched the Doctor of Philosophy in Computer Science, Master of Science in Computer Science and the Master of Science in Information Technology, in August this year to enrich programmes portfolio. The programmes commenced this semester and have gained a lot of interest both locally and internationally.

We are at the advanced stages of rolling out the much desired Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Bachelor of Science in Medical Laboratory Sciences, Bachelor of Education Science, Bachelor of Laws, Bachelor of Science in Data Science and Analytics, Post Graduate Diploma in Education, Master's and PhD in International Relations and Diplomacy.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen

We are also proud to announce that as part of our new culture change, Zetech University has revamped the brand. We have a new look and feel to signify the growth and maturity of the University as we shall be revealing shortly. The identity is not a departure from the current identity but a rejuvenation of the University going to the future-where we are focusing on running a sustainable and innovative institution in line with our 10-year Strategic Plan.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen

To our esteemed graduates today, I am emphasising that the journey does not end here. You have been taught and endowed with the skills. The world you are stepping into is dynamic and full of possibilities, and we believe that you are more than ready to navigate it and keep inventing the future. Remember, the knowledge and skills you have acquired here at Zetech University will serve as the foundation

for your future endeavours. Those with diplomas, progress to degree, those with 1st degree, progress to masters and those with masters progress to PhD. It is the best gift you can give yourself when young.

As you go forth, carry the Zetech University name in high esteem, and harness the skills and creativity you have developed here to contribute to a shared prosperity, for yourselves, for the communities, and the world.

Let Zetech University Core Values of Integrity, Customer Focus, Innovation, Teamwork and Excellence remain beacons to guide your life. As a Christian I am reminded of words in Psalms 18:25-27 'To the faithful you show yourself faithful, to the blameless you show yourself blameless, to the pure you show yourself pure,, but to the devious you show yourself shrewd.'

In the book of Numbers 14:28 God says to Moses 'So tell them As surely as I live, declares the Lord, I will do to you the very thing I heard you say.' Graduated when you become graduates learn to say good things about yourself

Matt 22:37 "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Love God and humanity. You will never go wrong. You are assured of success.

Congratulations, Class of 2024! We are incredibly proud of you. Continue inventing your future.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen allow me once again to appreciate each one of you for gracing this occasion in all your capacities.

Madam Chancellor ladies and gentlemen the festive season is on and children are home for Christmas. Zetech University wishes each one of you a great Christmas and holiday season.

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance-providence upon you and give you peace” Merry Christmas 2024 and a prosperous new year 2025.

It is now my pleasure to invite the Chair of the University Council to address this congregation.

Thank you, and God bless us all!

Prof Njenga Munene J

Vice Chancellor -Zetech University