**Principal Secretary State Department for University Education**

**Prof. Julia Ojiambo, Chair, University of Nairobi Council**

**Council Members present**

**Prof. Stephen Kiama Gitahi, 8th Vice Chancellor, University of Nairobi**

**Former Vice Chancellors present**

**University Management**

**University Staff**

**Partners,**

**Distinguished Guests Present here in Taifa Hall and those that are Online.**

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

Good morning!

Allow me to most warmly welcome you all to the University of Nairobi. For all those joining us on various virtual and electronic platforms across the globe, your presence here with us is greatly appreciated.

Historically, installation of a Vice Chancellor is an essentially significant and functionally symbolic rite of passage. In a University rich in tradition and heritage, installation is a symbolic rite of transition signifying succession at the helm of the university. It signifies that one leadership era has ended and ushers in a new one.

I am therefore privileged and indeed honoured to preside over the first installation event, of its kind, in the history of our nation. Barely five and half years ago, we gathered here to publicly celebrate the inauguration of the 7th Vice Chancellor of the University of Nairobi. Today, the COVID-19 pandemic has confounded us and presented unprecedented challenges, challenges that we must surmount for our own continued survival.

I wish to take this early opportunity to thank the university staff and students for according patience and respect to the Vice Chancellor recruitment, for steering clear of speculative discourse and for refraining from disinformation regarding the process. Over time, we have discovered that staff and student unions are not enemies of university leadership and that they, in fact, commend us when we do well. On this premise, I advise that we should lend a listening ear to staff and student grievances that may arise from time to time. Ultimately, we all work towards the same goal that focuses on cultivating and bringing out the best in each of us.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Most of us will remember that today’s installation event was scheduled for January this year. However, it was postponed indefinitely for reasons known within the public domain. That we celebrate this installation today is testament to the resilience that we have and continue to build as a University. We have proved time without number that whenever trials and tribulations have dragged us through dungeons of darkness, we have picked ourselves up and, through sheer determination, risen yet again like the proverbial phoenix. We must guard jealously the right to stand and fight for truth in all its hues.

I take this opportunity to thank our university fraternity for exemplifying fortitude, fortitude borne of the burning desire to do what is good and just. To paraphrase the words of the great Abraham Lincoln, thank you for ensuring that our University of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from the face of our nation! **Long live the University of Nairobi! Long live!**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Having paid tribute to the undying spirit of our university, allow me to congratulate and welcome one of our sons, Prof. Stephen Kiama Gitahi, following his appointment as the 8th Vice Chancellor of the University of Nairobi.

Reflecting on your appointment, I take cognizance of the fact that in laboring the recruitment process to fruition, our governors, as was expected of them, did not lose sight of merit as the touchstone for this appointment. Inevitably, I must congratulate the Council under the astute leadership of Prof. Julia Ojiambo for being brave enough to take the high road of merit when easier alternatives existed. For as long as this university exists, I beseech her governors, employees and alumni to steer clear of mediocrity and to steadfastly resist the temptation to betray the place of merit and excellence in our university. If we do this, our university shall claim the badge of the bastion of hope for our citizens and secure an enduring legacy worthy of emulation both at home and abroad.

In the spirit of excellence, I want to appreciate the Public Service Commission (PSC) for discharging its recruitment mandate with great dexterity. In a process previously characterized by toxicity and all manner of rumours and innuendo, PSC exemplified great depth of wisdom and courage that restored dignity and confidence in the recruitment process.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Enlightenment of a nation is the greatest asset it can bequeath itself. For this reason, the process of identifying who amongst us is the most suitable and capable candidate to lead the University’s educational endeavours into the future benefits greatly from a nonpartisan arbiter. In our case, this was the PSC. In my view, this largely cured political and vested interests, envy, horse trading and insider poisoning that often attend such processes. At the tail end of the process, however, we need measured safeguards to ensure that even though the skies may fall, the most meritorious candidate is appointed. If the law resolves this, we will permanently cement the place of competition and merit in our public universities.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The result of the recruitment process is a Vice Chancellor that best fits the bill for the current needs of the University. We therefore expect of the new Vice Chancellor and the Deputy Vice Chancellors who serve under him to be bold enough to take tough decisions of reengineering our systems and processes and instituting meaningful reforms in critical areas of organizational structure, governance mechanisms, fiscal and resource management, curricula amongst others.

Prof. Kiama, it is my humble submission that we have spared no effort in preparing the ground for you and your team to succeed in implementing all that is in the best interest of the University of Nairobi. I pray that wisdom and foresight may be in your stead from this day onwards so that you may act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with your God. For as long you tread this narrow path in the service to our community and country, be assured of my unqualified support.

Prof. Kiama, as you serve your term, remember every so often to step back and recalibrate. Ultimately, Pericles’ Greek wisdom prevails, “that what you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others.” As Napoleon Bonaparte, the great French Military General, once philosophized that a leader is a dealer in hope, I charge you to never forget that you carry with you the great sunshine of hope for many. Though darkness may sometimes cloud your skies, may you inspire your team to do the impossible and help them carry on during difficult times.

I wish you the absolute best; that your reign may be successful and your tenure fruitful.

With those few remarks, it is now my humble duty to invite the Chair of Council Prof. Julia Ojiambo to further invite Prof. Kiama to partake in the rites of installation as 8th Vice Chancellor of the University of Nairobi.

Thank you.