Mr. Kelechukwu Mbagwu's Lecture at Protestant University of Rwanda (PUR)

Introduction By the MC

As we proceed would like to welcome our guest speaker Mr Kelechukwu Mbagwu. He's going to talk on just a topic which he entitled:

"You stand at the dawn of your greatest triumph"

You are welcome. We clap as you welcome our guest speaker today.

Speech by Mr Kelechukwu Mbagwu

Thank you thank you very much and good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Please allow me to stand on all protocols already observed.

i thank you all for bestowing this honour on a non-intellectual like myself having the privilege of delivering the guest lecture at such a significant event in your academic calendar as well as in the lives of so many young men and women who face the herculean task of venturing into an exciting but judgmental world as the newest addition to your country's workforce.

To this youthful gathering in this beautiful country which I am visiting for the first time, I say felicitations on your achievement but roll up your sleeves for the real task has begun. As I said, I am excited to be visiting Rwanda for the first time. It gives me the opportunity to see things for myself. My previous encounters with this bountiful land come in four distinct phases:

- The first as a young boy I remember reading in the Guinness Book of Records that you were the tallest people on earth. There was this magnificent picture of about four or five, sorry five or six, warriors in traditional attire all wielding spares and looking fierce. The picture was angled in such a way as to show their impressive heights. I'm afraid that on this first encounter, Rwanda was just a footnote in the text. It was the land in which these magnificent beings dwelt

- My second encounter was as a young man freshly graduated like you and with a definite passion for entrepreneurial quests. I partnered with a very good friend and classmate to start a video rental business in my late father's garage; yes I am that old. We used to call them video clubs. One of the most popular films in our collection was called "Gorillas in the Mist" and again I'm afraid the reference to Rwanda was essentially in the background as the country in which the film was set

- There was however nothing subtle about my third encounter five or six years later when the front cover of the current Time magazine issue screamed a quote from a British cleric based in the country which said, *"there are no devils left in hell, they are all here in Rwanda"*. That of course was in reference to the horror of the genocide and sadly for quite a while that remained the lasting impression of this country. But it certainly ensured

that Rwanda was not in the subconscious anymore. It was always in our consciousness.

- Happily, my last and current encounter with this great country was for the majority of my maturity, and it has been of the outstanding success you have made of your country and of yourselves.

I can disclose to you that I was not the only one among my colleagues with a strong desire to come here and see for myself. What do we hear now?

- We hear that Kigali is the safest capital in Africa, and indeed the world.
- We also hear that Kigali is the cleanest city in Africa.
- Thirdly, we hear that Rwanda is the most desirable investment hub in Africa and one of the top 20 in the world according to the World Bank and widely reported by the likes of Bloomberg TV
- Fourthly, we hear that Rwanda has the most effective military forces in Africa, although we in Nigeria we would like to argue that with you, but seriously what a wonderful story.

I for one would not attribute this only to your good governance, although, that must have played a major role. The enterprise and industry of the entire Rwanda people must have injected the positivity into this success. That brings me to the point of my advice to the excellent young people I am addressing today.

You ladies and gentlemen do not need to be told that the traditional old school reasons for a university education no longer hold sway in a fast evolving rapidly progressing world. This has actually been the case for decades, though perhaps not fully noticed until recent times and developments have shoved these hard facts down our throats. Please don't misunderstand me. I am not about to throw in references to Bill Gates or Elon Musk or Mark Zuckerberg. I am not of the opinion that university education will ever become redundant, neither do I think that these gentlemen were right to drop out of their colleges, if in fact that's what they did, because all we know is what we read on social media.

I know it's great to be rich, but that's not what makes the world go round and definitely that is not more important than a thriving competent populace to a nation's progress and achievement. A university education is important not necessarily because it produces great doctors, lawyers, architects or engineers who can contribute significantly to the growth of their professions. Even though these are desirable things, I strongly believe that a good solid successful university education is the foundation for the working progress of any young man or woman, because it demonstrates to the world that you have the capacity for logic at a level at which you can be trusted to take an active lead in various enterprises.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is not restrictive, it is liberating. Here's the fact: a first degree doesn't make you an expert in any field, it has however prepared you

for success in a lot of different fields, why, because it has displayed to all that you have the ability for logical thinking up to a very high level. You cannot be successful in your university appraisals or exams without learning logic. It is immaterial whether you study theatre arts or quantum physics. Without the ability of logical thinking, you would not be graduating here today. But with the capacity for logical thinking which you have because it has been proven, you can go on to become anything you want to be depending on your desire and of course your ability.

This is not news. It has always been the case through the years even when our parents, bless their souls, fixated on their children becoming doctors, lawyers, or engineers. I have a doctor friend who runs a thriving and highly rated furniture factory. I know a lawyer who is one of the most highly placed investment bankers in my country. One of my former schoolmates is an architect who heads a major oil conglomerate and I don't think I need to tell you about a certain lawyer who was my classmate and is now the Vice Chancellor of the Protestant University of Rwanda.

Perhaps, I can talk about my own personal example, where as a graduate of geography and planning, I was able to build one of the top property development companies. I was in series of meetings for a new development in my country where one of the participants continuously referred to me as engineer. I completely missed the first reference, but when he repeated it again and again, I called him aside and

explained he was dressing me in borrowed robes, Although I do employ engineers, I actually am not an engineer.

The truth is ladies and gentlemen, I believe that a sound university education has opened up a world of opportunity for you young men and women. Please believe in yourselves and in your ability to capitalize on these opportunities. Once again, I say to you, congratulations at this journey's end and welcome to the beginning of another journey, because you stand at the dawn of your greatest triumph.

Thank you very much and God bless you all.