

**SPEECH BY THE OUTGOING CHANCELLOR PROF. MARY MURIMI ON  
THE OCCASION OF THE INSTALLATION CEREMONY OF DR.  
FLORENCE MUINDI AS THE 4TH CHANCELLOR OF DAYSTAR  
UNIVERSITY HELD ON MAY 24TH 2021 AT ATHI RIVER CAMPUS**

**Re-imagining our role in creating a better world through practical knowledge**

To the incoming Chancellor of Daystar University Dr. Florence Muindi, the founders of this great institution Dr. and Mrs. Smith, Alumni, University faculty, staff, Daystar Company members, Council members and the University Senate and management councils, all protocols as observed. I salute you this morning as we welcome Daystar's 4<sup>th</sup> chancellor. Allow me to thank the search committee for the time and effort they have put in this search that identified a chancellor that will lead Daystar in its determination to be servant leaders in the New Dawn. To all invited Guests in your various distinguished capacities, we are honored by your presence.

It is a special feeling to be able to stand here today to pass on the button. I remember as if it was yesterday, kneeling before a cloud of witnesses in this place and promised to be a servant leader, and I have strived to do the same. The last five years have been characterized by both mountain top and dark valley experiences. Fortunately, the mountain top experiences helped us to cross the dark valleys and created the resilience that has helped Daystar to not just survive but to thrive during difficult times. The downward spiral started with student unrest that threw the University leadership into shambles, and shook the University to the core but it also gave the University family an opportunity to recalculate and build resiliency.

Instead of continuing deeper in the downward spiral fueled by finger pointing and blame game, through the new dawn concept Daystar University led by the then newly installed Vice Chancellor Professor Ayiro introduced one of the pillars of Christianity characterized by listening to each other, forgiving each other and embracing each other. This exercise brought freshness, hope, and trust and more importantly a desire to walk together. As a University family we gained new energy that fueled our upward climb to the mountain top again as evidenced by increased student enrollment, increased

programs, expanded schools, establishment of University journals and hosting international conferences. Ladies and gentlemen that is resilience!

This new-found common ground, oneness, and shared values allowed the Daystar family to dream again and more importantly to think outside the box. This was evidenced by initiatives to solve our own problems, such as digging our own water well that solved the water problem that has been a major setback in Ardhi river campus. Thinking outside the box, Daystar family took advantage of our vast grazing area and bought goats and cattle as a means of generating funds; developed a vegetable garden, and an orchard to fight food insecurity. A forestation project underway with over 4,000 trees planted and continuing to combat negative climate change. Ladies and gentlemen this were mountain top experience!

At the mountain top our vision was clear, while suddenly COVID 19 pandemic disrupted the world and we were not spared. COVID 19 brought confusion, fear and desperation to our world, but unlike many Daystar University knew what to do, rose to the occasion and seamlessly converted the face to face classes into online teaching. Despite all these disruptions, with a hard-working faculty, staff and administrators, we were able to graduate students in the face of the pandemic. That is resilience.

While this sounds like a perfect story of thinking on our feet and resiliency, the higher education landscape is evolving, and we should be well advised to reimagine and rethink our strategy to remain relevant.

As you all know the basic role of higher institutions is to create and pass on knowledge, discover evidence and improve processes through research, and use those discoveries to train scholars and to solve societal problems. Please allow me to share with you a few forecasts that will characterize the higher education institutions of tomorrow:

**Recruiting students:** Competing for the same students with over 70 institutions and growing, we will need to utilize experiential marketing in the form of short school holiday courses for high school students. This approach is promising to be the dominant strategy of enrollment and student recruitment.

**Staying relevant:**—most of us pursued a college degree in order to get a job, however, that paradigm is changing with students increasingly getting a job to get a college degree. It is therefore critical that we know what the employers are looking for, so that when they want to send their employees to get the needed skills we will be on top of their list and ready.

**College degree price:** The ultimate aim of graduates of tomorrow is to get a debt free college degree with a job. The rising tuition and fees in higher education institutions are prohibiting the degree route while more growth is seen in non-degree educational offerings that are specific to skills and career paths. Daystar will be well advised to know the soft and technical skills needed by the industry and incorporate them in our curriculum.

**Developing the workforce:** Employers of tomorrow are looking for employees with a comprehensive understanding of the theory in related fields, critical thinkers, problem solvers, clear communicators and team players. While skill-based training will require that students are given opportunities for practical experiences, and soft skills, to succeed in their career paths.

It is therefore critical that institutions of higher learning provide a learning environment that gives the student an opportunity to practice, apply and translate theory into practice. Learners that are able to master comprehensive information and making it actionable in their personal and professional life.

This should include what we are already doing here at Daystar such as Internships, and project-based education. Degrees that are skill-based vs theory will become a staple of every college education.

**Critical thinkers and problem solvers are in demand:** For our learners to create successful career paths, and contribute to the success of their organizations, we will need to engage their critical thinking, departing from asking students to regurgitate information that we gave them but rather encourage them to use the information as a

tool to solve problems. A student may get an A in your class but they fail in their careers, if they do not develop their critical thinking.

Important steps to help us prepare for the changing landscape in the new dawn are simple but critical if Daystar will remain relevant and for our graduates to succeed in their career paths.

1. Starting at the beginning, Daystar must set bold goals—For example, imagine with me for just a moment, and visualize Daystar as a research-intensive university where we attract outstanding students, employ talented faculty and provide a learning inductive environment over and above how we describe ourselves at the University website.
2. Research intensive Universities find answers to the societal problems at the local and global communities.
3. In addition to research, we need to acknowledge that teaching excellence matters, by embedding core skills into programmes, designing projects on enhancing teaching, learning & assessment.
4. Imagine with me for another moment and visualize Daystar with education that is accessible and affordable by qualifying students from all backgrounds. By being accessible and affordable by all, we promote equity and solve societies number one problem.
5. If we can imagine those bold goals, then we will be obliged going forward to develop a curriculum that is informed by the Local and international Labor Market Analysis, that will identify employer needs, and more importantly develop practical learning that happens outside the classroom walls.

6. Develop a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, start-up incubator and business accelerator that produces job creators rather than job seekers.

As I finish my last speech as the chancellor of Daystar University, as we strive to be the best University in Kenya and Africa, let us remember what our God requires of us according to Micah 6:8—to **act** justly, to **love** mercy, and to **walk** humbly with our God. Let us change the world Daystar!