

**OPENING ADDRESS BY CHANCELLOR, UNIVERSITY OF GHANA,
JULY 2020 CONGREGATION**

Chairman and Members of the University Council,
Vice-Chancellor
Pro Vice-Chancellors,
Registrar
Provosts, Deans and Directors,
Guest Speaker,
Members of Convocation,
Staff and Students,
Alumni,
Graduands,
Guests from all around the world,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

Good morning.

I welcome you all to this virtual ceremony. During today's ceremony, undergraduate students from the University of Ghana School of Law in the College of Humanities, and the University of Ghana Medical and Dental Schools, in the College of Health Sciences, who have satisfied the requirements for graduation, will be presented and graduated.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Corona virus pandemic has completely changed the world as we know it. Activities such as visiting family and friends, attending social gatherings and indeed congregation ceremonies such as this one, have had to be redesigned, in order to safeguard our health and wellbeing, and curb the spread of the disease.

I know that members of the graduating class would have liked to gather with their classmates, friends and family in the University's Great Hall to share this special day, but I am sure that you will all agree with me that under the circumstances, a virtual congregation ceremony is the best choice.

University Management has worked hard to ensure that you have a memorable ceremony that is as similar as possible to a face to face one, and I trust that this will be a memorable occasion for us all.

I would like to take this opportunity to place on record my immense appreciation for the steps taken by University Management to ensure the safety of employees and students during these unprecedented times, and also the successful roll out of a system to continue academic work online. By all accounts, in spite of initial challenges, this project has been very successful. Soon, the last batch of final year students will complete their examinations, and thus bring the 2019/2020 academic year to a close. The Clinical year for the Medical and Dental students will however, continue and end in November, 2020.

Ayekoo to management and students and indeed all faculty, administrators and staff involved in this endeavor.

I would also like to acknowledge the leading role played by scientists and staff of the University's Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, the West African Centre for Cell Biology of Infectious Pathogens and all other frontline workers in the University who have contributed in various ways to the management of COVID-19 in Ghana. We salute you and appreciate all your efforts, especially the successful sequencing of the genome of the virus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic, by scientists of the University of Ghana.

As you are well aware, the University is preparing to receive the products of the first batch of the free SHS programme. The innovations thrust upon us by COVID-19 have afforded us the opportunity to explore both conventional and non-conventional ways of opening up access to higher education to these prospective students.

As the University works to complete the physical infrastructure to receive these students, we are also improving our IT infrastructure to strengthen our ability to offer a blended approach to teaching and learning.

Many of our students will be proceeding either to undertake further training in Law, Medicine and Dentistry, or to start practicing in their chosen professions.

I am sure that most of us taking part in today's ceremony have followed with interest, discussions on the calls for reforms in legal education in Ghana. In April this year, the President of the Republic was slated to open a major international conference on the future of legal education in Ghana, organised by the University of Ghana School of Law.

With participation from experts in legal education in Ghana, many other parts of Africa and from Europe and the United States, the conference was expected to result in policy and legislative proposals that would address the many challenges of legal education in our country today: from entry requirements and admission numbers; curriculum reform, teaching methodologies and examinations, to financing and long term outlook.

The conference has been postponed to next year because of the pandemic, and I am sure that we all look forward to the deliberations resulting in much needed reforms in the training of lawyers in Ghana.

In the meantime, I charge you, our graduating law students, to pledge to do your best to uphold the spirit and the letter of the law and the ethical standards of the noble profession that you have chosen to pursue.

In the wake of COVID-19, we are witnessing many innovations in the legal sphere. E-Justice, long overdue, is picking up fast, and many more court processes are being filed electronically now. These developments point to one thing: as you prepare yourselves to enter the legal profession of the twenty-first century, you must appreciate the critical role you must play in the

governance of our nation, and you must be prepared to do this in the context of the electronic and digital revolution that has only just started.

To our graduating Medical Doctors and Dental Surgeons, you are starting your profession at a time when the world is experiencing the Covid-19 pandemic and health workers are disproportionately affected. These times have re-emphasized the importance of our health care workers and the sacrifices that they make on a daily basis to ensure the health and safety of us all.

As you join your colleagues on the frontline of the fight against COVID-19 and other diseases, I wish you every success, and may you be safe in whatever professional setting that you find yourself in.

To all our graduating students, I hope that on the occasion of your graduation, you will take stock of what you have achieved and make a conscious decision to let your experiences guide you in your future endeavours. The road ahead will call for more hard work and dedication, and I wish you all the best.

You have played your part, by putting in an enormous amount of hard work, and spending countless hours studying. Your efforts have certainly not been in vain, and we salute you all as you complete this journey today.

I take the opportunity to wish you the graduands, who are being presented today, the very best on this very important occasion. We share in your joy on the successful completion of your programme of study and we are very proud of you.

Ladies and gentlemen, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ebenezer Oduro Owusu, on his re-appointment to a second term. Professor Owusu, I salute you for your many achievements in your first term, and wish you every success in your second term, that starts in a few days, on August 1, 2020.

Now, distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, I am delighted to declare this morning's Assembly, duly constituted for the Award of Degrees of the University of Ghana to successful graduands.

It is customary for the Vice-Chancellor to give a report at Congregation, on developments in the University over the last academic year. I now call on the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Ebenezer Oduro Owusu, to present some highlights of the Vice-Chancellor's report.