

Graduation ceremony speech (20th November 2009)

By Joseph Amikuzuno

The Dean, Professors and staff of the Faculty of Agriculture, family members and friends, special guests, fellow doctoral colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, I am honoured by the privilege to speak to you on this important occasion.

Every thousand miles journey, they say, begins with a single step. Today, the journey, embarked upon a few years ago by my fellow doctoral graduates and I, to obtain our PhD degrees here in Goettingen is formally ending. Today, our dream of adding the Dr. Title to our names is being realized. Today, and precisely in the next hour or two, we will be part of the classic Göttingen culture of doctoral students kissing the Gänseliesel. Today is therefore an important landmark in the life journey of my colleagues and me.

No one, however, makes a journey alone. Whatever people may accomplish, those accomplishments are usually obtained through the combination of their own personal drive and motivation, as well as the love and support given to them by the people around, the people they journey with and the families they leave home. Therefore, I would like at this point to acknowledge all those who have been so instrumental in bringing us to where we are today, the people who have made today possible.

In this regard, I would like to thank the Dean of the Faculty, Professor Dr. Brenig for his introductory remarks, and years of commitment and service to the Faculty of Agricultural Sciences here in Göttingen. I must thank all the professors of our Faculty, especially the academic supervisors and co-supervisors of those of us graduating today. Our graduation today is being realized because of your excellent commitment, tireless efforts and patience in guiding us along the pathway of the all-inclusive intellectual excellence that

Göttingen is famous for. On a personal note, I found it motivational studying under my Professor, so I thank him for allowing me to stand on his shoulders to obtain this degree. I would also like to thank the chairman of the examination Board, Prof. Dr. Rolf Rauber, and all the staff of the examinations office who have put this graduation ceremony together.

Now, beloved family members, friends, loved ones and erstwhile colleagues, we owe you a multitude of appreciation for your support, sacrifice and encouragement in the course of our study, and for having travelled from far and near to celebrate with us today. The family members and friends who could not come (including my family in Ghana), I know they share in our joy today and equally deserve our appreciation.

Last but not the least in my acknowledgement list, I would like, on behalf of the international students, to extend our sincere gratitude and appreciation to the government and people of Germany in general for the financial support [to those of us with DAAD or KAAD scholarships], and to the city Göttingen in particular for the warm reception and care that has been extended to all of us during our stay here. I am certain that our fond memories of this city and the country in general will last a lifetime. Which of us can ever forget the soon to start, splendid German Christmas markets and their delicacies of Gluhwein and bratwurst! Personally, I will fondly remember the beautiful fields and farms, and the landscaped gardens, parks and pastures that I saw whenever I went with my colleagues jogging or riding to the country side.

Now, a word to my fellow doctoral graduates:

Fellow doctors [soon to be], as we are going out into the world, we are a generation with an amazing potential for change. This is because we live in an age whose leaders have the heart, drive, and genuine desire for a better world order. In addition, the world's economic and physical environments are in a

downturn and yearning for positive change. Let us therefore endeavour to use the knowledge and experience we acquired here in Göttingen to act as agents of the needed change wherever we go after here. Let us all help contribute to a meaningful, responsible and sustainable development of our respective, countries, continents and the world at large. And when you leave here, always remember what the German writer Goethe said: **“Whatever you can do or dream you can [do], begin it. [for] Boldness has genius, power and magic in it”**.

With this line of wisdom, I thank you all for your attention and best wishes for the future.