

SPEECH DELIVERED BY HIS EXCELLENCY JOSEPH NYUMA BOAKAI, SR.,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF LIBERIA, AT THE 18TH COMMENCEMENT
CEREMONY HELD AT THE PARADE GROUNDS OF THE REGIONAL MARITIME
UNIVERSITY IN GHANA ON SATURDAY 29TH JUNE, 2024

The Chancellor and Board Chairman of RMU;

The First Lady of the Republic of Sierra Leone;

Honorable Ministers and Members of the RMU Board;

Vice Chancellor, University Registrar & Members of RMU Management;

Members of the Committee of Experts of the RMU Board;

Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic & Consular Corps;

Heads of Government & Private Institutions;

The Staff and Students of the Regional Maritime University;

Eminent Guests;

Representatives of the Media;

Distinguished graduates;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

With profound joy, I bring heartfelt greetings from the gracious and resilient people of the Republic of Liberia to my dear brother and friend, His Excellency Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of the Republic of Ghana, the good people of Ghana, and the representatives of our distinguished member states of the Regional Maritime University (RMU).

Mr. Chancellor, I am deeply honored and humbled by your invitation to serve as this year's Commencement Keynote Speaker and Chief Guest of Honour for the 18th Convocation ceremonies of this prestigious university, which has consistently exemplified academic excellence in line with its motto: "Centre of Excellence." I am immensely grateful to the Board of Governors, Faculty, Management, and Staff of the Regional Maritime University for this extraordinary recognition, accompanied by the award of an Honorary Doctorate Degree to be bestowed upon me today. As they say in Twi, 'Meddase pii!!'. Liberia holds this honor in the highest regard, and we are exceptionally gratified by this distinction on this historic day.

I am enormously proud of the significant progress and transformation the RMU has achieved over the years, establishing itself as one of Africa's leading maritime universities. This remarkable success is the result of hard work, dedication, and the visionary leadership of the University's faculty. We, as member states of the RMU, remain indebted to you for the greatness you have nurtured within these walls.

The RMU began as the Ghana Maritime Academy in 1958, a small learning institution owned by the Government of Ghana. In 1983, it evolved into the Regional Maritime Academy when four other West African countries joined to share the responsibilities of running the institution. Decades later, on October 25, 2007, it attained full university status and was launched as the Regional Maritime University by the former President of Ghana, John Agyekum Kufuor.

I commend the five member states of the RMU—Cameroon, Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, and Sierra Leone—for envisioning and realizing the establishment of a regional Maritime University to educate and mentor seafarers in the sub-region and beyond. Knowing that shipping would ultimately be the primary source of international trade and commerce, there was, therefore, the need for the region and the continent to prepare for leveraging this opportunity.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I can proudly say conceiving the idea of the Regional Maritime University was visionary. This collaborative effort is a testament to the foresight of our founding fathers and a mark of Pan-Africanism, pioneered by visionaries like Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of Ghana.

It is important to recognize the enduring unity and cooperation among the member states in maintaining the RMU for over 41 years. This significant venture, which unites five countries to pool resources for the common good of the region and its people, aligns with the aspirations of the founding fathers of the African Union.

To achieve irreversible socio-economic transformation, Africa must embrace this spirit of unity. Our continent has the potential to be a global leader if we harness our resources effectively and collectively. Africa's unity is crucial for realizing this potential. Hence, I humbly urge us all to enforce this union by giving increased support to sustain this great university of ours. As President of Liberia, I pledge our unwavering support to the RMU, committing to elevate this institution to unmatched heights on the continent and beyond.

Liberia is currently the world's largest ship registry by gross tonnage, highlighting the critical importance of maritime education to our country. The Liberia Maritime Training Institute and

the Regional Maritime University, which deliver low and high-end maritime programs, respectively, are key institutions of education that we will continue to support to benefit from opportunities provided by the global maritime sector.

As I am informed that graduates from Liberia Maritime Training Institute often matriculate to RMU for their undergraduate degrees, I have instructed the authorities at the Liberia Maritime Training Institute to increase the number of students sent to RMU in the coming years, reflecting Liberia's maritime legacy and the commitment to maintaining its prominent position in the global maritime industry.

To the graduates, this is a unique moment in your lives, representing the culmination of years of hard work, dedication, sacrifice, determination, and courage in pursuing academic success. You have overcome many challenges to earn your place among the graduates of RMU today.

As the American film producer Viola Davis aptly stated, "All dreams are within reach. All you have to do is keep moving towards them." Your steps thus far are steps towards your dreams, and with the right ingredients—prayer, hard work, focus, and discipline—these steps can lead to great success.

Prayer is essential as we seek God's guidance in our endeavors. Hard work is indispensable for achieving any goal. The American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow reflected this famously in his poem: "The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight, but they while their companions slept, were toiling upward in the night!" Then, focus, as it helps us stay on track amidst distractions. And finally hold onto discipline and character, which are the foundation of success. As it is said, "Academic degrees may take you to the top, but only discipline and character can keep you there." Discipline and character entail honesty, integrity, patience, and perseverance—values that will open doors for you in the world.

As you leave these prestigious walls of RMU with pride, I urge you to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, integrity, and discipline. Make RMU and Africa proud. Remember, you carry our blessings as you venture into the maritime world—do not let us down.

I join the Board of Governors, Faculty, and University Management in commending your parents and sponsors for their support throughout your academic journey. Make their investments worthwhile with outstanding performance in your careers.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, graduates and families, at this juncture, I would like to pause, as you wait with bated breath, to pledge on behalf of the Republic of Liberia, the construction of an additional dormitory for students here at RMU.

In closing, I congratulate you once again on your achievements. The maritime industry awaits your contributions. Go forth with dedication, determination, confidence, courage, and a competitive spirit of excellence.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the Board of Governors, faculty, management, teaching staff, and students of RMU for this honor.

I wish the University continued success in its pursuit of excellence in maritime education and training. Thank you, and may God bless RMU and our member states.