# MUSTAFA ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

*All praise belongs to the Creator of our Universe,*

*the most Beneficient, the most Merciful.*

 Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, respected guests and dear graduates:

Heartiest congratulations to you all on your well-earned degrees and welcome to the real world.

I am deeply grateful to the University of Greenwich for honouring me with this award. It simply adds on to the gratitude I already owe to Woolwich and Greenwich from my earlier years. The timing of this Award by the University of Greenwich Court is uncanny. It could not have come at a better time to give the much needed push to my new project “Future of Humanity”

# I came to UK in Sept 1952, just turning 18, and stayed on for 6 yrs. What drew me here was to learn what made this small country, Brittania, rule the waves ( in which Royal Navy with its big battleship guns made in the Royal Arsenal played a significant part), a country on whose lands the sun never set. Not only did I learn that, for which I am deeply indebted to Woolwich Polytechnic and the Royal Arsenal, UK also taught me about the laws of rise and fall of nations through Toynbee’s *tour de force* book “ *A Study of History*”

# I learnt that engineering is grounded on *“terra firma”.* Its designs and products have to work and deliver, unlike say physics with its flighty imagination and theorizing. Engineering design calls for practical compromises, say between strength and safety, which has many lessons for practical living. It is surely no coincidence that a country with astounding development in the last generation, China, is unique in having its President and more than half of its cabinet as engineers.

Now let us come to the brass tacks. What have I learnt in my 80 years life that may be of help in your future.

1. Knowledge is advancing rapidly, almost exponentially at a breathtaking pace. Doubling time of knowledge in many areas is now less than 5 years. Thus, the need of the day is for **continuing education** and the ability to self-educate throughout one’s life. This puts a premium not so much on accumulating facts but on acquiring the tools of analysis and how best to put them to use productively.
2. Next, we come to the value of life. We are continuously learning just how unimaginably large and complex is the universe of which we are an integral part. Both religion and science tell us that humans are unique in this universe. In fact, we hold a place of honor in nature. Humans are children of stars, not just poetically but literally, since the heavy metals essential for life, even in traces, could only be created in supernovae star explosions. Thus, each human’s life has incalculable value, which needs to be recognized to respect ourselves and to respect others.
3. The lofty and mighty mountains, the raging seas, the blazing sun, the beautiful moon and the vast variety of gigantic stars can only do what nature bids them to do. They have no will of their own, only we humans do. We are the only creation which has the freedom of choice. So much so that we can doubt, even dare to deny, the existence of our very Creator.

In freedom to choose lies our uniqueness in nature and also the hazards. We have been loudly proclaiming the value of freedom at least since the French Revolution, the Declaration of American Independence. But unfortunately we have not emphasized its twin value, which is that while we are free to choose we are also accountable for the consequences of our choices. We will reap what we sow. Just like there are invariable physical laws governing this universe, we need to recognize that there equally are moral laws applicable to human activity. We have to live with the consequences of our choices. From that there can be no escape. Not recognizing that is what has led us to the existential challenges and threats facing mankind today.

Yet with all its conflicts and inequities, this world can still be a lovely place. You can make it into a paradise.

# So my message to you all is:

“Rise up, hold your heads high. Enjoy life, share it, preserve and protect it. Do exercise freedom, but remember accountability. Value yourself and value others.

So friends, go, go, go. The world is yours. Grab the steering wheel. *Bon voyage.* Best of luck to you and God bless you all.”