



For Immediate Release

**Her Excellency Margaret Kenyatta speaks
at the Aga Khan Academy Mombasa's 10th Graduation Ceremony**



Mombasa, Kenya, 21 May 2016 – The Aga Khan Academy Mombasa celebrated its 10th graduating class at a ceremony held earlier today at the Academy. The First Lady of the Republic of Kenya, Her Excellency Margaret Kenyatta, was the keynote speaker who addressed the 68 members of the Class of 2016, congratulating them and saying she was “truly amazed at the success and potential of this class.”

This year's graduating class has demonstrated exceptional achievement in their university scholarships and admissions. The Aga Khan Academy Mombasa graduates have been awarded a significant number of scholarships that together amount to USD 5.3 million, including the prestigious MasterCard Foundation Scholarship for Sub-Saharan African Students, New York University Abu Dhabi's International Student Scholarship, and Aga Khan Academy specific scholarships from Simon Fraser University and University of Alberta.

The graduates have gained admission to renowned universities across North America and Europe, including Yale University; Johns Hopkins University; University of California, Berkeley; New York University; University College London; McGill University and the University of Toronto. They have also secured admission to universities in South Africa, Germany, Russia and the United Arab Emirates.

The 2016 graduating class aspires to build rewarding careers in a wide variety of fields such as Rocket Technology and Cosmonautics, Finance and Economics, Business and Computer Technology, Molecular Biology/ Biomedical Sciences, Pharmacy, International Development, Law and Politics, Environmental Science and Policy, and Sociology and Social Work.

Her Excellency Margaret Kenyatta recognised the strength of the values that the graduates have learned at the Aga Khan Academy. "Here, you have been taught to think critically and act compassionately. You have learned to read diligently and live responsibly. You have been encouraged to create, collaborate and embrace curiosity. You have been taught to live with diverse people and treat all people with dignity and respect. Here, you have learned to serve."

The First Lady further said, "I believe Aga Khan Academy has taught you that the plight of others is important, that the problems around us ultimately affect all of us and that because you have been given so much you must give that much more back to the world. I believe that you have been prepared to do just that, to give much."

Notably, more than one-third of the Class of 2016 received financial aid to allow them to benefit from an Aga Khan Academy education. A significant number of these students were scouted from rural and other marginalised segments and received financial assistance to cover all their costs. And now, their education and the connections of the Aga Khan Development Network have enabled them to receive admission to some of the world's top universities as well as scholarships to cover their university education.

Over the past 10 years, Aga Khan Academies students have received nearly 1.5 billion Kenyan shillings (more than USD 15 million) in financial support. This has allowed them to access the

Academies' international standard of education and facilities based on merit alone and regardless of their family's social or economic circumstances.

Director of Academies Salim Bhatia congratulated the graduates and noted the First Lady as an example of commitment and perseverance in helping those in need – values the Academies also instill in their students. He built on an earlier quote from Her Excellency about running marathons when he encouraged the students to push their boundaries further by challenging themselves. “You will encounter setbacks and at times you may only be able to walk, not run. But, keep going. You have to finish. And, when you achieve your goal... you know that the only limits to your achievements are those you set for yourself,” stated Mr Bhatia.

The Head of Academy, Bill O'Hearn congratulated the graduates, and advised them to be life-long learners. He also encouraged them to be "inspired through challenge and compassion" and make a difference in their communities.

The First Lady concluded by reminding the graduates that their education has given them the means to make a difference in this world. "I am convinced that as each of you goes on to shine your light in whatever little corner of the planet you will find yourselves in, our world will be a much brighter and much better place. My personal request to you is that you come back home and shine here... Class of 2016, you've made it this far, now go out and shine!"

NOTE

The *Aga Khan Academy Mombasa* is the first in an international network of non-denominational, co-educational, residential schools being established by His Highness the Aga Khan in countries in Africa, South and Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Established in 2003, the Academy is founded on the basis of the Aga Khan's vision to develop homegrown leaders with a strong sense of ethics and civic responsibility, who will contribute to Kenya's future.

The Aga Khan Academy selects talented girls and boys based on merit, regardless of socio-economic background, race, religion or culture. Financial assistance is available to ensure that lack of means does not limit access. The curriculum is based on the highly regarded International Baccalaureate programmes for students in grades 1 to 12, enhanced with additional areas of learning specific to the Aga Khan Academies. The school also offers a residential programme that accommodates senior-level students in grades 6–12 as well as staff in secure and well-supervised housing facilities.

In addition to providing an international standard of education and leadership experience to its students, the Aga Khan Academy works toward strengthening education quality widely by providing professional development programmes to educators in the region and through modelling best practices as a centre of excellence in education.

The Aga Khan Academies network is one of the education agencies of the Aga Khan Development Network, which works to improve the welfare and prospects of people in the developing world, particularly in Asia and Africa.

For further information, please contact:

Bill O'Hearn
Head of Academy
Aga Khan Academy Mombasa
PO Box 90066-80100, Mombasa, Kenya
Tel: (+254) 735 931 144
E-mail: Bill.OHearn@agakhanacademies.org
Website: www.agakhanacademies.org/mombasa

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