

His Highness Prince Rahim Aga Khan V, UCA Chancellor's Remarks –
University of Central Asia – Convocation 2025

Honourable Ministers;
Honourable Governors;
Chair and Members of the Board of Trustees;
Rector, Faculty and staff of the University;
Parents, partners, and friends;
And most importantly, dear graduates of the Class of 2025:

I am truly delighted to be addressing you and your families on this special day, and to share a few words as we mark this important milestone together. I understand that celebrations are taking place at both our Khorog and Naryn campuses, and I am sorry not to be with you in person.

Let me begin by warmly congratulating the graduates on this day, which marks the culmination of five years of hard work by you and your faculty, and the sacrifices of your families. You will leave today with your degree certificate in hand – a testament to your achievement – and carry with you the knowledge gained during your time at UCA for the rest of your lives.

Today's ceremony is not only a celebration of your achievements, but also an opportunity for us to mark the 25th anniversary of the signing of the International Treaty that established UCA as a regional university through the extraordinary partnership between the Founding States of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, and the Ismaili Imamat. Together with our partners and many stakeholders, we have achieved a great deal over these 25 years – and I am excited about the successes the next quarter of a century will bring.

This is my first address to you as Chancellor of the University, and I wish to begin by acknowledging my late father's vision in conceptualising, founding, and implementing this extraordinary and pioneering project. If he were here with us today, he would be proud and delighted to witness the achievement of the graduating class.

In the work of UCA, and across the broader endeavours of the Aga Khan Development Network, the Ismaili Imamat remains committed to improving the lives of the people of Central Asia – working in close partnership with governments and other valued collaborators through our shared efforts and projects. Access to high-quality education is a fundamental pillar of our approach to development and has the potential to bring about transformational and lasting impact.

We are living through a period of profound transformation and change, and the pace of technological advancement is accelerating. The field of education is undergoing the biggest change since the printing press, and UCA will have a duty to be at the forefront of this change. We are also witnessing the dramatic effects of climate change on our lives, which is particularly relevant in the mountain regions in which UCA operates. Global economic trends are also evolving, with significant shifts in trade patterns amidst a volatile geopolitical backdrop, and re-emerging models of governance.

In this context, I trust that the graduating class is well placed to navigate the challenges ahead. The majors you have studied are of particular relevance – whether it is Economics, Computer Science, Communications and Media, or Earth and Environmental Sciences. More importantly, our programme will have given you broad exposure to many disciplines and developed your ability to learn and to apply critical thinking. You are also fluent in your national languages and in English, the universal language of business and the internet.

The litmus test of the value of a university is how its graduates fare in the future – what they make of their education. I have every confidence that this graduating class will go on to be great contributors to society, and my best wishes and prayers are with you for your success and happiness.

Let me conclude by expressing my deepest gratitude to all who have made this journey possible over the past 25 years: the Founding States, the faculty and staff, the Board of Trustees, our donors and volunteers – and importantly, the communities who have welcomed this University into their midst. The road ahead will bring new challenges, but also new promise. Let us walk it together – with purpose, in partnership, and with enduring hope.

Thank you.