



Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor

Prof Mandla Makhanya
Principal and Vice Chancellor of UNISA
Opening and Welcome
Human Settlements Seminar
15 August 2017

St Georges Hotel



Programme Director and DG of the Department of Human Settlements, Mr Mbulelo Tshangana



The keynote speaker and Minister of Human Settlements, Honourable Ms Lindiwe Sisulu, MP



The Deputy Minister of Human Settlements, Honourable Ms Zoe Kota Fredericks, MP



The Chairperson of the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee, Honourable Ms Nocawe Mafu, MP



The Gauteng MEC for Human Settlements, Honourable Mr Paul Mashatile.



The Executive Mayor of the City of Tshwane, His Worship, Mr Solly Msimanga



Statistician General, Mr Pali Lehohla



Members of the panel and fellow academics



Distinguished audience and participants



Members of Unisa family, academic and administrative staff, students and members of our alumni



Members of the media present here today



Ladies and gentlemen, fellow compatriots and fellow Africans

It gives me great pleasure to extend a warm hand of Ubuntu welcome to this great institution as we settle to absorb great policy and practical insights on one of the most important portfolios in our country today. Let me also preface my short remarks with the recognition of our mothers, our sisters, our spouses and partners, our daughters and all girl children in our society as we mark the women's month. Igama lamakhosikazi malibongwe!

As I stand before this distinguished audience I can't resist my memory to the 19th of February 2016 when I stood here in this lectern addressing the audience on the occasion of the launch of

BAdmin degree in Human Settlements Management. That was a historic occasion and a milestone in Unisa's partnership with the Department of Human Settlements. I go further to 2015 when this relationship was initiated. We gather here today to cement and reinforce this special relationship as we hope that each one of these important events and milestones will further nourish this tree of partnership and collaboration into a giant Baobab Tree whose roots are anchored in the depth of our common purpose of nation-building, whose trunk is wide enough to withstand the gale-force winds that sometimes test any bond, whose branches and leaves leap into the skies symbolizing our common vision and aspirations for the future. As I welcome you here today I also witness collaborative governance and partnership in action as national, provincial and local governments are represented by their leaders sharing the same platform with scholars as we reflect on this important subject of human settlements.

Unisa's vision statement, "The African University Shaping Futures in the Service of Humanity" finds practical expression in each one of these high impact partnerships with our government, civil society and business sector as well as many such partnerships with multi-national bodies such as the African Union and institutions across the world. We have and we continue to collaborate with our government on a range of programmes that seek to resolve challenges of our

times and anticipate arising opportunities for the benefit of humanity. This is a verifiable proof of our commitment to drift away from the proverbial ivory tower on the hilltop and descend to the valley where the real human challenges are.

Human settlement is as old as human beings but it has evolved through different epochs of human civilizations. From hunter-gatherer ancient communities to the expanded settlements of the Iron Age to urban settlements of the Industrial Age right into the current epoch of the 4th Industrial Revolution. South Africa faces a range of unique challenges. It is one of the most urbanized African countries with a rapid growth of migration and settlement in the urban areas coming from rural areas within South Africa and also absorbing successive waves of migrants from outside the country. This makes any planning and projection for sustainable human settlement a complex moving target. The urban sprawl, mushrooming of informal settlements as well as increasing demand for services and infrastructure in addition to government effort to eradicate an apartheid geography combine to form a formidable problem which needs creative and imaginative ways of dealing with it. We all need to appreciate that all these increasing demands occur in the context of strenuously constrained and even diminishing public resources. The work done by this department in the face of these challenges is commendable hence our commitment to walk

with you in developing human resources and requisite research knowledge in order to tackle these challenges. After all, smart knowledge economies require such partnerships to maximize our capacity to achieve our goals.

The brain-power and experience that you have marshalled for this conference is equal to the task at hand of diagnosing, clinically dissecting the challenge of how to respond to the rapid increase of urbanisation in order to come up with proper prescriptions. The academic community and academic institutions will walk with you all the way in this journey of searching for sustainable solutions to our rapid urbanization and all the resultant social, economic and even political challenges this contributes to.

I welcome and invite you to this festival of ideas and practical solutions to this pressing challenge of our time. Again I thank you for choosing Unisa to host this event and partner with you.

I thank you

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