



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MANDLA MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

GRADUATIONS

23 March 2017

- Chancellor of the University of South Africa, the Honourable President TM Mbeki
- Parents, spouses, partners, family and friends of our graduates
- And most especially this evening, Unisa graduates.

It is a real pleasure to welcome you to this very special occasion – your graduation! We are delighted to be celebrating this age old rite of passage with you and your families and loved ones.

Now, what many of you will not have realised, is that tonight is doubly special and historic. I think there is someone on our stage who you all recognize very well. I speak here of course of our newly inaugurated

Chancellor, President Mbeki, the former President of the Republic of South Africa This evening marks Chancellor Mbeki's inaugural graduation officiation, and so I know that you will understand when I ask that we break protocol and extend to Chancellor Mbeki warm Unisa welcome and well wishes!

To our graduates this evening - you are making history. You will be the first graduates to be capped by our Chancellor, President Mbeki, and I have no doubt that this will bring an added dimension of distinction to this very special event in your lives - and judging by your smiles of delight and pleasure, I would say that I am quite accurate in that assessment!

Ladies and gentlemen, as you will experience this evening, Unisa's graduation ceremonies have a joyful and colourful character, which speaks directly to our conscious decision to reflect our African culture and ethos. Loud exclamations of pride and pleasure, joyous ululations and even the odd tune on a mouth organ feature in Unisa's graduations across the country and the continent. It seems that Unisa's students of all hues, and their families, are intent on making the most of this really special occasion. Rightly so.

However, inasmuch as we encourage your celebration, *we insist on being heard* and no noise will be allowed to block out the sound of any student's name being read to our audience as they make their way across the stage. I ask that you respect that and exercise the necessary decorum. Every single student deserves to enjoy their special moment to the full.

Above all, graduations are a very formal and solemn acknowledgement by one's peers, of knowledge that has been acquired and mastered successfully by the student. When students kneel on the bench to be capped, they do so as students. When students rise after having been capped they do so as graduates who join their peers as this country's intelligentsia - and Unisa's alumni. It is a moment of honoring and acknowledging - and let us not forget - of very solid achievement.

As academics, some of whom are seated on this stage, we too have a reason to celebrate. We live for moments like these, when our students become confident and proud graduates. It is what makes it all worthwhile, because it means that we have also succeeded in our tasks - and so you will appreciate why graduations mean so much to so many people.

This year marks the University of South Africa's 144th year of existence. And as we celebrate this magnificent achievement in South African -

and African - higher education history we can be justifiably proud of this iconic South African institution that has transitioned from an examining body in the 19th Century, to the largest Open Distance Learning University on the Continent; we can be proud of the people who have led Unisa; the staff who have worked for Unisa; and the countless thousands of graduates who are to be found in every conceivable profession and in every country in the world. Tonight you will be joining their ranks, and you have every reason to be proud Unisa graduates.

And so I invite you now, to relax and enjoy the proceedings - and the celebrations that will undoubtedly follow.

Welcome once more

I thank you.