



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR, UNISA

ICDE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

SYMBIOSIS CENTRE FOR DISTANCE LEARNING

PUNE, INDIA

11 MARCH 2017

Unleashing the potential of ODL – reaching the unreached.

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS (10 mins)

- Dr Swati Mujumdar, Director: Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning (SDL)
- Mr Gard Titlestad, Secretary General, International Council for Open Distance Education (ICDE) as well as members of the Executive of ICDE
- Professor Belinda Tynan, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) and Vice-President, RMIT University Australia
- Dr Padmpriya Irabatti
- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen and of course, new friends.

These past two days have been a revelation in terms of the density and variation of the programme and presentations; the innovation and enthusiasm that has been so evident in all of them; the collegial and respectful environment in which all of this has been shared; and importantly, the contribution of this conference and the discussions, toward a greater appreciation and potential and application of ODL.

I have particularly appreciated the lighting of the lamp ceremonies which I'm sure have resonated with us all on so many levels. Irrespective of our culture or religion, light is associated with brightness that dispels darkness and enables us to see clearly. This conference has undoubtedly fulfilled that function, and we are leaving with a clearer appreciation of ODL in this part of the world.

Light is *also* equated with knowledge, and just as the repeated lighting of the lamp and the sharing of its flame does not diminish its brightness but rather spreads it and grow it, so too the knowledge we have shared at this conference will not lessen as we leave, but will be shared and imparted to others, thus increasing its scope, stature and impact across the world.

Ladies and gentlemen, technology presents us with another kind of "lamp" in that it is a wonderful facilitator of sharing, and shared

knowledge - well beyond the confines of location or circumstance. It is up to *us* to appreciate its potential and to leverage it effectively if we are to enjoy the full benefits that it has to offer. And conferences such as this one contribute in a meaningful way to that appreciation.

I would like to thank each and every person who has attended this conference and contributed to its success: from my colleagues in the ICDE, to our wonderful hosts at the Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning, to the speakers, facilitators and presenters, and not least, to those who have provided our safety and sustenance. I know that I speak on behalf of the ICDE executive in particular, when I say a very sincere: *thank you very much.*

In closing I would like to reiterate Gard Titlestad's call to you to diarise the 27th ICDE World Conference: *Teaching in a Digital Age - Re-thinking Teaching & Learning*, which is to be held in Toronto, Canada from October 16 – 19th. My University, the University of South Africa, hosted the 26th ICDE World Conference and it was without a doubt a highlight of our institution's 144 year-old history. It was not only a time of learning but also a time of great celebration and networking. We forged many new friends and collaborations which we continue to cement. I know that our colleagues at Contact North, who will be

hosting the 2017 Conference, will ensure an even more enriching experience! We look forward to seeing you there.

Ladies and gentlemen, there is an old adage that says: *Some people talk too much and say too little.* So, before I am accused of that at this concluding stage of the conference, allow me to say a very simple, yet very profound, *thank you.*