



Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor

Prof Mandla Makhanya

Vice Chancellor and Principal of UNISA

Welcome Address

PUBLIC LECTURE ON SA-GERMANY RELATIONS

24 June 2015

Senate Hall, Unisa Main Campus



Programme Director and Executive Director of the
Institute for Global Dialogue, Dr Siphamandla Zondi



Our keynote speaker and the Ambassador of Germany,
His Excellency, Dr Horst Freitag



Honoured guests from the diplomatic corps



Members of Unisa extended management and our staff
members



Unisa students



Distinguished audience



Ladies and Gentlemen

It is with great pleasure and excitement that I welcome you to the public lecture that focuses on South Africa's relationship with Germany. South Africa and Germany have one of the most important and enduring bilateral relationships and yet not many people are immediately aware of the character and the scope of this diplomatic and commercial relationship. Much focus tends to be on the traditional ties with the former colonial power, Britain, or with the USA and the emerging ties with Brics emerging markets, particularly China.

Even more important, is the fact that both South Africa and Germany are regional powers in economic and political terms in their respective continents, therefore their bilateral relationship has a bearing on inter-continental relationships between Africa and

Europe. Moreover, both Europe and the African continent are experiencing important economic, social and political developments that may reconfigure global geopolitics, and both South Africa and Germany are important role-players in shaping the emerging trends. The cumulative effect of the aforementioned variables makes it even more important to have this lecture in order to close the knowledge gap of a bilateral relationship that is very important and yet least understood by an average person.

Currently, Germany is one of the leading investors in the South Africa's manufacturing sector, particularly the automotive industries such as Mercedes Benz, Volkswagen and BMW. Germany is also involved in a range of other science and technology sectors with some of that work relating to research and innovations in research institutions and universities. As a scholar I also recognize the German heritage in different fields in the academia.

On the global front, South Africa and Germany have stood together in their campaign for reform of the international institutions including the configuration of the United Nations Security Council which is archaic as it is still mainly informed by the global situation that prevailed 70 years ago when so much has changed in the world.

I also acknowledge the work that numerous German Foundations are doing in the support of civil society initiatives in South Africa and across the African continent. The various collaborations between German and South African universities are also an important component of the ties that bind our two countries. This mutually reinforcing and beneficial relationship is of great strategic importance when you consider waves of immigrants fleeing their countries seeking opportunities in Europe even risking their lives in the process as well as similar waves of migration heading to South Africa seeking relief and economic opportunities. South Africa's relationship with Germany should also have an impact on these problems in addressing the fundamental and causal push and the pull factors for migrants. This enduring relationship has the potential

of being a force of positive impact in the service of humanity. As we engage and reflect in this lecture we should also be looking at ways of deepening this relationship and identifying areas of further engagement. In fact I propose that this lecture becomes a regular event where we can periodically assess progress and areas that may be constraints in advancing our relationship.

Unisa is the largest university in South Africa and on the African continent, and it is one of a handful of global mega-universities. Its students are drawn from all over the world and across continents. It has a global footprint as a pioneering long distance education university. In October last year Unisa signed a historic and unprecedented partnership agreement or Memorandum of Understanding with the African Union Commission. When I signed that agreement with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Her Excellency, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, I knew that our global and continental responsibilities had been dramatically

increased and the burden of this historic responsibility is always weighing on my mind. It is for this reason that we may seek collaboration with some of your universities and science-technology institutions so that the widened scope of our responsibilities is complemented by support from a developed nation like yours. Unisa has a science campus in Florida that hosts CSET and CAES and I am certain that there can be many opportunities for possible collaboration especially in the area of research and innovation.

Your Excellency, only last week you delivered your address in the Climate Diplomacy between the European Union and South Africa that was also hosted by Unisa. Unisa has become a host for a range of international conferences and events and we are hosting more diplomats and government leaders than any other university. The reason for this is the fact that our Vision Statement is instructive in saying we are “The African University Shaping Futures in the Service of Humanity.” We are an engaged university that fully understands the role of a higher education institution in developing relevant skills, shaping future leaders, doing relevant research that assist in

searching for solutions to societal and humanity's problems and in the development of policies. It is in this spirit of Ubuntu that I welcome you all to this public lecture.

I would also like to take time to express my deep sense of gratitude towards the Institute for Global Dialogue under the leadership of Dr Siphamandla Zondi who has indeed translated the name, the vision and mission of IGD into a practical expression in the programmes that truly provide space for global dialogue.

Thank you and wish you the best in your deliberations.

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