



Welcome Remarks and Introduction of the  
Honourable Maite Nkoana-Mashabane  
By Prof Mandla Makhanya, Principal and Vice  
Chancellor

**Senate Hall, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Theo van Wijk Building,**

**Unisa, Pretoria**

**1 August 2014**

Programme Director: Dr Somadoda Fikeni

The Honourable Minister Maite Nkoana–Mashabane, our Minister of  
International Relations and Cooperation

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners present

Members of Unisa Council present

Dr N Arendse, Chief Director: BRICS STI Coordination, Department of Science  
and Technology

Mrs N Barnard, Director: BRICS International Relations and Cooperation

Ms Sanusha Naidu, Independent researcher and discussant for today's lecture

Dr Siphamandla Zondi, Director: Institute for Global Dialogue

Board Members of the Institute for Global Dialogue

Representatives from various government departments present

Other Educational Institutions present

Members of the international organisations, NGOs/CBOs

Members of the Business Community and Non-Governmental Organisations  
present

My colleagues from Unisa management and staff members

Members of Unisa student representative council and other students bodies  
present

Members of the Media fraternity present

Other Members of the Unisa community

Distinguished members of the Audience

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am deeply honoured to receive and welcome you honourable Minister and this distinguished audience to Unisa on this historic occasion. A gathering of this magnitude, on a topic of this profound global importance, for an event hosted by a joint partnership of Unisa, DIRCO and the Institute of Global Dialogue is truly an important milestone for this institution. South Africa has presided over a number of multi-lateral global forums and it has hosted quite a number of them and yet this lecture which is meant to give this audience, the academia and the nation a feedback on South Africa's presidency of BRICS following the Summit in Brazil is a distinctive, commendable and unique space for engaging the civil society and the diplomatic corps in an interactive session. The City of Tshwane has one of the highest concentrations of diplomats in the world and Unisa, one of the largest Open Distance Learning University in the world and the largest in the Southern Hemisphere, is well-positioned to play host to more of such engagements in partnership with our government and Institute of Global Dialogue. Only a few days ago, Unisa in partnership with DIRCO and the Institute of Global Dialogue

hosted another briefing lecture on the coming G20 Summit in Australia. These and many other partnerships are a concrete proof that Unisa is an engaged University which is unshackling itself from the conventional stigma of universities being ivory towers in the vast societal landscape where there is a need for positive interventions and engagements. All these give a true and practical meaning to our vision, ***“Towards the African University in the Service of Humanity.”***

Honourable Minister we welcome this and future engagements as Unisa is ready, able and willing to walk this path in partnership with your department and government in many other projects including the one of conceptualizing and defining the African Union Agenda 2063. The Brics Academic Forum and Think Tank should also take note of the fact that we stretch our open hands of partnership in their future programmes.

It is hard to imagine, how, in such a short space of time, South Africa, which was a pariah state and a skunk of the world could have transformed itself, in just 20 years, into one of the leading global players championing the African Agenda. The uni-polar global

configuration of power which generally characterized the post-cold war era in the 1990s is shifting towards a multi-polar system. One of the emerging game-changers in this geopolitical and economic space is BRICS forum of five nations which account for almost half of the world population and about 20% of the global GDP. BRICS is a global force to reckon with and it is poised to play a significant catalytic role in changing the global socio-economic and political arrangement. The creation of the BRICS Development Bank is yet another milestone which has a potential of shaking the very foundations of the post-World War II Bretton Woods Institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF. South Africa's hosting of the BRICS 5<sup>th</sup> Summit, taken in this context, was a historic moment for this country and the African continent thus making this briefing an important event for reflection. As we gather in this Senate Hall to receive a lecture briefing on South Africa's presidency of BRICS, I cannot help but think that we are witnesses of and participants in the making of history. Future generation will read about how BRICS evolved and shaped the world and yet here we are direct observers of the midwives of the

unfolding epoch-making global developments. I would like to conclude with a quotation from a historian, Will Durant, when he proclaimed that ***“The present is the past rolled up for action, and the past is the present unrolled for understanding.”***

Our keynote speaker today, who needs no introduction, has been instrumental in South Africa’s joining of BRICS, its hosting as well as many other key achievements such as the campaign for the chairpersonship of Her Excellency, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma of the African Union (AU). Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma became the very first woman to chair the OAU/AU in its history. Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane is a seasoned diplomat and a consummate relentless leader who is driven by a sense of purpose. She has occupied different leadership roles in our country and in international forums. She was at the heart of South Africa’s presidency of BRICS before Brazil occupied this role. So she is the best person to give this lecture and brief us on South Africa’s Chairpersonship of BRICS.

I would also like to take this moment to say happy women's month to all the women, the mothers and young girls of our nation, our continent and the world.

Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, it is now my honour to present to you the Honourable Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane to deliver the lecture.