



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

WELCOME ADDRESS

BREAKFAST DIALOGUE WITH H.E. DR MOHAMED
ELBARADEI

“DEMOCRATIZATION IN AFRICA AND UNFINISHED REVOLUTIONS”

Kgorong Building, UNISA

26 MAY 2015

- ✚ Programme facilitator, Dr Somadoda Fikeni
- ✚ Your Excellency and our guest speaker for the dialogue, Dr Mohamed ElBaradei
- ✚ The Chairperson of Unisa Council, Dr Mathews Phosa,
- ✚ The Deputy Chairperson of Council, Dr Sebiletso Mokone-Matabane and members of Unisa Council present
- ✚ The Chairperson of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, Dr Brigalia Bam
- ✚ The CEO of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, Mr Marx Boqwana and members of the Foundation in attendance
- ✚ The former Principal and Vice Chancellor of Unisa, Prof Nyameko Pityana and Mrs Dimza Pityana
- ✚ Representatives of government
- ✚ Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- ✚ Business leaders
- ✚ Extended Unisa Management
- ✚ Unisa Staff members
- ✚ Members of the NSRC and all Student leaders
- ✚ Project Team responsible for all the logistics and coordination
- ✚ Members of the media
- ✚ Distinguished audience

I am excited to once more welcome you to the Breakfast Dialogue Series after an intellectually stimulating and thought-provoking Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture that was delivered by his Excellency, Dr Mohamed Elbaradei. After having a great lecture for dinner last night you wake up with what promises to be a great breakfast dialogue by a

distinguished international statesman and a public intellectual in his own right. Now you know why a great university like Unisa is called a centre of knowledge, our essential diet for supper, for breakfast and lunch is knowledge production, knowledge processing and knowledge dissemination as you can witness in these engagements. I welcome you to a dialogue session that presents not only a different format of engagement but also a related but distinct topic focusing on “Democratisation in Africa and Unfinished Revolutions.”

Back in 1963, African leaders converged in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, in a historic meeting that established the Organization of African Unity. Their main objective was the African unity and the waging of a decolonization struggle as a united front. 52 years later African countries have almost all received their political independence but the struggle for democratization and genuine economic emancipation and development remains the major challenge facing the

continent today. In essence Africa today is at the crossroads. On the one hand, Africa is saddled by a myriad of political, social and economic challenges as seen in internal political strife in Somalia, Central African Republic, Libya, Northern Nigeria, eastern regions of the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan. Many other countries remain politically unstable with a tenuous security. The kidnapping of young girls by the Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria as well as series of attacks of shopping centres and a university by the Al Shabab stand out prominently amongst a series of events. The paradox of a continent richly endowed with natural resources and yet struggling with grinding poverty is illustrative of the African economic structural challenges. These political and economic conditions have triggered a wave of forced migration sometimes with tragic results such as the regular drowning of hundreds of people crossing the Mediterranean Sea seeking relief in Europe and all the other unfortunate incidents witnessed in our continent. Africa has borne the brunt of modern epidemic diseases such as HIV/Aids and Ebola.

Yes, it is not all doom and gloom, some observers have even coined the term, “The Rising Africa Narrative” when they see the 11 of the 20 world fastest growing economies, *albeit* from a low base, being African countries. With a relatively young population and a fast growing well-educated and skilled middle class, Africa has positive prospects of benefitting from demographic dividends if it has a well-crafted development programme.

This Breakfast Dialogue is meant to tackle one of the most important aspects of challenges facing Africa, democratization process or consolidation of fledging and often fragile democracies. After the democratic wave of independence a considerable number of African countries regressed to all kinds of military rules and authoritarian regimes until the second democratic wave of the 1990s which ushered in multi-party democratic wave but this too faced its challenges of

effectiveness and consolidation. In North Africa, as we heard in the lecture delivered last night, a wave of popular protests promised a new dawn of a wave of democratic revolutions but the Spring is not naturally progressing to a bright summer of democracy as in some cases it has regressed into a political winter season of despair.

This dialogue is led by an African sage who not only has analysed and observed these political developments but has been an active participant in his own country and across the world. I cannot think of a more appropriate person to lead this dialogue than our guest speaker today. But I will resist the temptation of introducing him as our Chairperson of Council and a doyen of our liberation struggle, Dr Mathews Phosa, will certainly do justice to that process. All I can say is that our former president and patron of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, President Thabo Mbeki, often championed the concept of Africans defining themselves and resisting being defined by others who then

impose unsuitable solutions on them. In engaging in this process not only are we engaging in a continental soul-searching conversation but also seek realistic solutions that will give the true meaning to the African Union Agenda 2063 as well as the dream of African Renaissance of a united people rising from centuries of oppression and humiliation.

I want to acknowledge the fact that our partnership with the Thabo Mbeki Foundation is a model partnership that is relentlessly yielding high value that is mutually beneficial. Other partners of the university should take a leaf from this partnership and use it as a benchmark.

I welcome you to absorb, reflect and robustly engage in this dialogue in a constructive manner of building our future as Africans. I invite you to spread the word beyond this gathering into your communities and forums.

I thank you.

Shukran