



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

2017 EARTH HOUR CONCERT

MIRIAM MAKEBA CONCERT HALL, MUCKLENEUK CAMPUS

24 March 2017

- Programme Director, Ms Thelma Louw from the Environmental Sustainability Office
- Acting Vice-Principal Advisory and Assurance Services, Mr Jan van Wyk
- Colleagues from the Department Risk and Compliance and the Environmental Sustainability Office
- Unisa colleagues
- Participants in this afternoon's Earth Hour Concert.

A very good afternoon and welcome to this second Earth Hour concert.

Last year, I was fortunate enough to attend the first Earth Hour concert and I was struck not only by the enthusiasm of the audience, but also by the relaxed and joyful participation of the performers. It was as I have always suspected – Unisa has a lot of hidden talent!

Colleagues, it's a real pity that we don't have the time to enjoy more of these types of events. Whether we are listening to a beautiful voice, a piece of music, or a choir, or a musician - music

in whatever form we receive it, has a way of reaching that part of us that is untainted the by the ugliness and stress that surrounds us. In that sense colleagues music is a healing and unifying force. Kofi Anan former Secretary General of the United Nations had this to say about music:

“In a world of diversity where often values clash, music leaps across language barriers and unites people of quite different cultural backgrounds. And so, through music, all peoples can come together to make the world a more harmonious place¹.”

I would like to believe – to hope – that the same is true for Unisa. We are engaged in a process of transformation at Unisa that will require us to challenge our own long held perceptions, beliefs and practices – about ourselves and about others. Given our very limited social interaction with one another, this will be a difficult thing to put into practice. I believe that it is activities such as this one – and I really hope to see more of them - that will begin to break down barriers and build up the kind of inclusive and collegial culture which we all long for at Unisa. And why not? Unisa and music are synonymous. We have a long and proud history in music - its teaching and its promotion - and therefore this event brings together the essential components of our humanity and Unisa’s present, past and future. All of these speak to our sustainability, as a species, as an institution, and as a planet.

And so I would like to compliment the Environmental Sustainability Office on this initiative, which I believe will contribute in a meaningful way, to Unisa’s cultural transformation and equally importantly, raise awareness around environmental sustainability.

As we look back on the 12 months since the first earth hour concert at Unisa, we can only marvel at what has happened on the environmental front around us. Internationally we have witnessed record-breaking temperatures and snowfalls, fires and volcanic activity, and we have also celebrated the first anniversary of the Paris agreement at COP21.

¹ Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s introductory remarks at the lecture on “Why Music Matters” by Professor Leon Botstein in New York, today, 8 November:

And colleagues it would be all too easy to shrug all of this off as far away and not relevant to us – as other people’s business. But this is a luxury we do not have.

In our own country we have seen and felt the effects and impact of the worst drought in decades (which still prevails in the Western Cape Province), followed by a tropical storm and severe flooding in the northern provinces – particularly in urban areas. Climate change is right on our own doorstep. It will take crops and stocks several years to recover from the drought and we are all called upon to contribute to the restoration of the balance and to the healing of the earth. I’m proud to say that Unisa has done its small share to mitigate its carbon emissions by planting more than 200 trees across the country as part of the *Unisa Forest* and by commissioning its first solar installation.

Then, just as we were heaving a sigh of relief, we got news of the negative impact of urbanisation on oak trees that are more than 100 years old in the North West province and the devastating effect the marauding army worm has had on crops throughout the Continent. This should bring the message home that climate change, and even the consequences of migrations and socio-economic and political dynamics, have an impact on us, our natural environments and our economies. The responsibility for mitigating these risks and offsetting natural disasters and phenomena, resides with each and every one of us. We should all be earth ambassadors and sustainability warriors.

Under the auspices of the WWF, Earth Hour is a worldwide grassroots movement uniting people to protect the planet, and engaging a massive mainstream community on a broad range of environmental issues. The date of the event is chosen to coincide with the time of the Spring equinox in the northern hemisphere and the Autumn equinox in the southern hemisphere – a time that has been celebrated globally with music and festivals, throughout the ages. This afternoon we continue that tradition.

The Unisa earth hour concert aims at providing Unisans the opportunity to celebrate our small contribution to a sustainable environment through the medium of music. And as I have already mentioned the concert also provides a space for socialising and getting to know one another.

Many of the artists performing this afternoon are from our own ranks - talented Unisans that have a passion for environmental sustainability. The works the artists have chosen to perform reflect their interpretation of their love of and passion for protecting our planet.

I welcome you to this second Unisa Earth Hour Music Concert and invite you to sit back and enjoy this celebration of life, light and music.

I thank you.