



The Signing of the MOU between The African Union
Commission

And

The University of South Africa

At

AU Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

13 October 2014

Prof. MS Makhanya

Principal & Vice Chancellor

Statement

Her Excellency, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Nkosazana-Dlamini Zuma

The AU Commissioner for Human Resource Development, Science and Technology, Dr. Martial De-Paul Ikounga

Head of Division: Policy Analysis and Research Department of Strategic Planning, Mr. Christopher Kachiza

The delegation and leadership of African Union Commission

We bring you warm Ubuntu greetings from South Africa and more specifically from the University of South Africa. I am happy to be part of this historic and ground-breaking event of the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the African Union Commission and the University of South Africa. The formalization of our collaboration with the premium continental organization is both unprecedented and the most significant strategic partnership that my university has ever entered into since its establishment. I have no doubt that this cooperative agreement will be of mutual benefit to the African Union Commission and to the University of South Africa, and it has the potential to establish a model and a platform for collaboration between African universities and the AU on a range of fields.

UNISA's vision statement which is ***"The African University shaping futures in the service of humanity"*** reinforces this collaboration while it also gives both practical and hugely significant symbolic meaning to it. UNISA is the largest university in Africa and in the Southern Hemisphere and it has a global footprint in terms of its student enrolment as an Open Distance Learning university as well as its international partnerships. Unisa also has a learning and service center here in the Ethiopian Capital, Addis Ababa, thus creating physical proximity that will also assist in realizing the goals of this collaboration. In its endeavours to become a premium

African university with Africa-focus and Africa-centeredness, Unisa has already implemented a number of programmes of building capacity across the African continent. Some of the notable examples include The Programme in Management of Democratic Elections in Africa that has trained and built capacity of election management commissioners and officials since 2012. Through this programme and its experiential learning that involves sharing of experiences and best-practices, some African countries have improved their election management practices and policies. Unisa academics were involved in the capacity building and formulation of some of government institutions during the establishment of the state of South Sudan. Unisa's Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute is also involved in training a progressively growing number of young African scholars for leadership roles in various fields while it has also provided a platform, in partnership with the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, for African leaders to debate and reflect on a range of African issues. Unisa has a number of Africa-focused Institutes and programmes as well as the accredited trans-disciplinary international journal, The International Journal of African Renaissance Studies. Unisa has also launched the Thabo Mbeki Modern state-of-the-art Presidential Library whose aim, amongst others, is to collect and preserve records and information of African leaders which are currently dispersed all over the world outside the African continent.

Unisa's proximity to the Pan-African Parliament in Midrand, South Africa also opens a range of possibilities within the framework of this collaboration. Unisa has a lot to offer in various fields including governance, agriculture, business leadership, environmental sciences, science and engineering including the cutting-edge Nano-sciences.

In our history we read about the great African civilizations, kingdoms and empires such as the Egyptian, Nubian, Kushite, Mapungubwe, Mali,

Songhai, the Monomotapa/Mutapa, the Great Zimbabwe and many others. We also read about the great learning centers of Africa such as Alexandria and Timbuktu, and all these are a testimony of Africa's greatness and its contribution to human civilization. History also reminds us of the painful episode of the scramble for Africa which resulted in calamities such as slavery, genocide, colonialism and apartheid as well as the use of Africa as a proxy in the Cold War geopolitics. This rude interruption of African development has left scars and ruins whose legacy we still struggling with today. From the ashes of African ruins emerged great visionaries such as Kwame Nkrumah, Haile Selassie, Ahmed Sekou Toure, Julius Nyerere, Marcus Garvey, W.E.B du Bois and others who, in the dim mist of adversities, made a clarion call for African unity informed by the Pan-African philosophy and vision. Out of these efforts, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was born in 1963 and colonialism was finally defeated. In our recent history, former president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki called for the African Renaissance as well as the audacious call for the reclaiming of the 21st century as the African century, something that more than a decade ago seemed improbable. Today the African Union is championing the notion of African solution for Africa's problems and the Africa rising narrative is gaining traction informed by material facts of great prospects of Africa rising as an economic powerhouse in the global landscape. It is against this background that Unisa, out of deep conviction, believes that we need put our shoulder on the wagon and complement as well as support the AU vision and Agenda 2063. Collaboration of this nature will unlock the great potential of the two partnering organizations in this symbiotic relationship. Unisa will also lead a process of creating a platform for many other African universities to take part in this epic struggle to actualize the African renaissance and Agenda 2063. The challenges Africa continue to face are complex and they need maximum cooperation among all organs of the civil society, universities, business sector and governments and Non-governmental organizations.

Africa has watched, with appreciative envy, the rise of the Asian Tigers, the reconstruction of Germany and Japan in the post-World War II era into economic global powers, the rise of China into a superpower. We assertively say Africa's time has come and in our bold assertion we are convinced that this will be Africa's century if practical steps of collaboration, like the one we are signing today, are realized and their full potential is exploited. We can see as far as 2063 because we stand on the shoulders of the Pan-African giants who envisioned a united, prosperous, peaceful and just Africa standing tall amongst the nations of the world. Through these small steps we are putting the building blocks on the foundation of a future that our fore-bearers had outlined and predicted.

Unisa is deeply honoured to enter into this partnership with the African Union Commission and we make a commitment that we shall honour our role. We also extend our invitation to the Chairperson of AU Commission, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and leadership of the Commission to come and give public lectures at Unisa as a way of articulating AU agenda and vision 2063.

Again I take this time to thank the Chairperson and leadership of the AU for making this partnership possible. We leave the AU headquarters with warm invigorated hearts. In a sense we leave part of Unisa with the AU Commission and take with us part of AU Commission as we begin a long exciting epic journey.

The words of Jean Massieu, ***"Gratitude is the memory of the heart"*** are most appropriate in expressing our gratitude at reaching this milestone in our relationship.

Asante,

Siyabonga

Enkosi

Rea leboga

Merci

Shukran

Amesege nallo

I thank you.