



*Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor*

**Prof Mandla Makhanya**

**Principal and Vice Chancellor of UNISA**

**Opening and Welcome Address**

**"World Homeless thinking globally, acting locally"**

**Kgorong Building, Unisa**

**10 October 2015**



Programme Director, Professor Tinyiko Maluleke



His Worship, Executive Mayor of the City of Tshwane,

Councillor Kgosientso Ramokgopa



Our keynote speaker for the occasion, Ms Thandi Luthuli-Gcabashe



My colleague, Principal and Vice Chancellor of the University of Pretoria, Professor Cheryl de la Rey



Speakers and participants in the programme, Prof AP Phillips, Dr ZJ Banda and Rev C Manganyi, Dr Stephan De Beer as well as Prof TD Mashau of the Tshwane Homeless Forum



I also recognize the representatives of partners in this programme, the City of Tshwane, University of Pretoria, Unisa and the Tshwane Homeless Forum



To all participants and activists gathered here today

I welcome you all to this event marking the 2015 World Homeless Day with warm open heart of Ubuntu/Botho. We are honoured that our partners selected Unisa to host this event thus giving concrete meaning

to our partnership for a campaign against the social ill of homelessness. True to the motto of this event, we are thinking globally in terms of marking this international day that is being observed throughout the globe whilst using the local context of Tshwane metropolitan area as a focal point of our intervention. Indeed, this international awareness and solidarity need concrete local action to push back the social ills that create or result from homelessness.

Any institution of higher learning or university has three fundamental pillars that define its mandate and these are:

1. Teaching and learning
2. Research and innovation
3. Community engagement

Our involvement in this project is a natural organic expression of our core mandate. In face of the deep social, economic and political challenges facing our city, our province, our country, our continent and indeed the whole humanity in the world, universities cannot fold their arms or indulge in a world of abstract sky-gazing ideas, we have to be part of the positive force seeking solutions in the service of humanity wherever we may be located. It was this philosophy and policy orientation that informed my university's decision to join this coalition for social justice. Unisa's vision, "The African University shaping futures in the service of humanity" also articulates our strategic intent to be involved in the African solutions in the service of humanity. ubuntu/botho is a defining feature of the soul of Unisa and this intervention is a concrete expression of ubuntu/botho adage which says "I am because we are." Our vision and strategy in general, is taken seriously and it is Unisa's covenant with the society in our quest for delivery of services which are of public value.

We should, as a matter of fact, accept that Gauteng is the economic hub of South Africa and Southern Africa, and therefore, is a socio-economic magnet that attracts population migration from rural areas of South Africa and from the rest of the continent and south Asia. The events in Europe pertaining the refugee crises, are a reminder of the harsh realities and consequences of unequal development and political instability. It is for this reason that Gauteng has the fastest growing population in South Africa thus creating conditions that signal that the problem of homelessness is going to be a stubborn reality that will need maximum efforts and collaboration. Tshwane has one of the highest concentration of diplomats in the world, and therefore indicate that the eyes of the world and impressions on South Africa will always be seen through the prism or lenses of this city. Resolving the scourge of homelessness in the City of Tshwane will also be setting the trend as well as presenting the best face of South Africa to the world.

I am certain that university partners in this relationship will play a crucial role in providing evidence-based policy advices as well as study of the nature and patterns of homelessness in the city. In this way we shall provide the vital information for the policy makers, advocacy groups for homeless people and all the role-players in this space. A proper diagnosis of any problem often lead to a more pointed prescription. Universities may also play a key role in assessing the impact of interventions being made.

As we meet and deliberate today, we are meeting a coalition of positive action against homelessness and related challenges. We are standing to be counted as we remember all those who are homeless in this city, in our country and in the whole world. We are here to say that we are taking a stand where we are located as responsible and active citizens driven by human solidarity.

I look forward to the keynote address and the rest of deliberations during this occasion.

I thank you