



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

WELCOME AND CONTEXTUALISATION

UNISA/MAIL AND GUARDIAN CRITICAL THINKING FORUM

ZK MATTHEWS/SENATE HALL, MUCKLENEUK CAMPUS

29 June 2016

- Madame Programme Director, Professor Divya Singh: Vice Principal of Advisory and Assurance Services
- The Editor in Chief/CEO of the Mail and Guardian, Ms Verashni Pillay, our co-host this evening
- Ms Esther Letlape and all Members of the Unisa Council here present
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Our distinguished panelists:

- Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, Chairperson of the Moral Regeneration Movement and former Executive Mayor of the City of Tshwane
- Rabbi Gideon Pogrand, Business Ethics Consultant
- Ms Janine Hills, CEO and Founder of Vuma Reputation Management
- Mr Terry Booysen – CEO of the CGF Research Institute
- Leaders and Members of the Ecclesiastical Community
- Government Officials
- Leaders of Business Community and Parastatals
- Leaders of the Unisa NSRC
- Leaders of labour and the student formations
- Members of staff of Mail and Guardian
- Unisa staff and students
- Members of the media
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a pleasure to welcome you warmly to the University of South Africa, and to this important and timely discussion.

Ladies and gentlemen, the White Paper 3 (1997) asserts that critical thinking is demonstrated in forward-thinking 'enlightened' reflection, as well as the evaluation, analysis and renewal of current knowledge and the production new knowledge, in an environment of tolerance and for the public good. This responsibility is extended to students,

who must 'be able to speak out on ethical, cultural and social problems completely independently and in full awareness of their responsibilities, exercising a kind of intellectual authority that society needs to help it to reflect, understand and account. They must also 'play a role in helping identify and address issues that affect the well-being of communities, nations and global society' (Unesco 1998).¹ The intellectual community are similarly tasked to 'promote the spirit of tolerance towards different views and positions and enhance democratic debate and discussion' (Kampala Declaration, 1990).

The call from the national and global agendas is clear: we are *all* exhorted to be active members of a critical citizenry. While this is not new for the higher education sector, we don't seem to be doing so well. As back as 1997, South Africa's Department of Education (DoE 1997: 1.4) asserted the following:

Higher education has an unmatched obligation, which has not been adequately fulfilled, to help lay the foundations of a critical civil society, with a culture of public debate and tolerance which accommodates differences and competing interests. *It has much more to do, both within its own institutions and in its influence on the*

¹ *World Declaration on Higher Education for the Twenty-First Century: Vision and Action* (1998) (Unesco 1998a: 2(b), 2(f).)

broader community, to strengthen the democratic ethos, the sense of common citizenship and commitment to a common good.

We are here today ladies and gentlemen, to do just that. We aim to contribute to thought leadership and critical dialogue through this Critical Thinking Forum series, which promotes critical thinking and engagement on matters central to the national discourse. Our aim is not only to engage in constructive thinking and debate – it is also to harness our creativity, innovation and ingenuity in tapping into and sharing new and alternative perspectives on our current context. To do this we have crafted a programme that includes premium discussion forums such as our commemorative lectures; high-profile institutional events, such as the Africa Day lecture and Africa Speaks conversations); and the round-table discussions and special events hosted by the Office of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, as well as those hosted by institutes such as the Institute of African Renaissance Studies (IARS), the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute (TMALI), the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) and the Institute for Social and Health Studies (ISHS). This programme we believe, will harness through thoughtful engagement, our collective critical thinking abilities and responsibilities, in the service of the best interest of our society and our country.

In line with the call to establish a culture of public debate and

tolerance, we are honoured to be co-hosting this platform with Mail & Guardian. M&G's content focuses on investigative, independent and credible journalism, and deals without fear and favour, with the issues of the day – so much so that the newspaper is highly respected and regarded for its pioneering opinion editorials and fearless reporting. The Mail & Guardian carries an average per issue readership of 531 000 and is the ideal media partner to facilitate Unisa's positioning as an institution renowned for academic and thought leadership.

The paper is uniquely positioned to carry the series of institutional thinking forums mentioned above to influence and shape discourse on issues of national and international importance. Furthermore, it has the advantage of an already existing and tested platform, the Critical Thinking Forum, which is aimed at a similar, if not the same, target audience as the Unisa commemorative lectures and public debate; and which constitutes a perfect area of convergence for both parties.

Ladies and gentlemen we are extremely privileged to have with us today a panel of guest speakers who are eminently equipped to delve into this burning and extremely topical issue. Father Smangaliso Mkhathshwa, Rabbi Gideon Pogrand, Ms Janine Hills and Mr Terry Booyesen, bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience, gained through long and deep immersion in their respective fields. I

have no doubt that their insights will contribute to a deeply critical and insightful engagement. To our panellists – a very a special and warm word of welcome to you all. Allow me to thank you in advance for giving of your precious time to be with us and for the insights that we will share and interrogate this evening.

I thank you.