



Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor

Prof Mandla Makhanya
Vice Chancellor and Principal of UNISA
Welcome Address
University Ombuds Chapter
OR Tambo Building, 14th Floor, Room 09
7 September 2017

- ◆ Programme Director and Unisa Ombudsman, Dr Maria Peenze
- ◆ Member Ombuds from various sister institutions
- ◆ Distinguished guests, presenters and participants
- ◆ Ladies and gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to you all on this special and historic occasion of discussing and contemplating an initiative that will have profound impact if well conceptualized and implemented. On this heritage month I welcome you in the spirit of African Ubuntu and say feel at home here at Unisa.

Firstly, with a sense of humility, I am happy that you chose Unisa as a venue for exploring the possibility of establishing a South African Chapter of University Ombuds. This is a historic moment in the evolution of University Ombudsmen role and I wish you success with this initiative. Without any fear of contradiction I would say that Vice Chancellors and Principals of South African universities would welcome this initiative of creating a platform and capacitating University Ombudsmen. I am also impressed by the possibility of developing of curriculum to be considered for Ombuds.

We live in a constitutional democracy where human rights form the core of our society today. Moreover, in the last two and a half years South African public universities and higher education in general have experienced the rise of protests, strikes, contestations and demands around #Fees Must Fall, #Outsourcing Must Fall, #Gender Based Violence Must Fall as well as #Rhodes Must Fall. These increased

demands for social justice and transformation are indicative of increasing social consciousness of various stakeholders especially our students who will settle for no less. When some of these collective and individual grievances are not resolved they escalate into upheavals that can disrupt the very life of an institution thus negatively impacting on its core business. It is for this reason, among others, that we welcome this initiative of establishing a South African Chapter for University Ombuds as this will also create a platform for sharing experiences and replicating best practices as well as mutual support.

As you reflect on your work it is important that you should also be acutely aware of the ecology, interdependence and complementary roles of various institutional mechanisms of dispute resolution, mediation and general policies aimed at dealing with grievances. It is in this forum that you could also review existing procedures, policies, resources, systems and new technologies that would enhance your work. If this forum proves to be effective it could be a model that can be replicated in other parts of our continent and beyond.

As you gather here today I implore you to think beyond what you have before you and begin to think of what a university student profile will be like in the next decade, what new challenges and opportunities will

the increased interface between university community members and new communication technologies and platforms create or impose. You may even indulge into scenario analysis for different trajectories of South African university system as it will be profoundly changed by insourcing, transformation and new funding formula. Let me conclude by invoking the African proverb, “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.” Your coming together and establishment of this Chapter will ensure that you go far beyond what individual institutions, no matter how well-resourced, would have done.

Let me take this time to wish you a productive session that will have great impact and leave a legacy in our universities. Let the work begin.

I thank you

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