



Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor

Prof Mandla Makhanya

Principal and Vice Chancellor of UNISA

Welcome and Opening Address

**Celebrating 60 Years of Women's Collective
Activism for Social Change**

Unisa-Sawid Women's Month Celebration

12 August 2016, ZK Matthews Great Hall, Unisa

- 🇳🇷 Programme Director and SAWID Trustee, Dr Vuyo Mahlati
- 🇳🇷 Our keynote speaker and Women Executive Director & Under-Secretary-General of UN Women, Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka

- 🇿🇦 UN representatives in attendance
- 🇿🇦 Director-General: Department of Women on behalf of Ms S Shabangu, Minister of Women in the Presidency, Ms JA Schreiner
- 🇿🇦 Our esteemed panel member, who deserves to be singled out individually, a veteran of women's struggle for justice and a leader of the historic 1956 Women's March on the Union Building, Mme Sophie Williams-De Bruyn
- 🇿🇦 A veteran of women's struggle and a seasoned pioneering trade unionist, Mme Thandi Emma Mashinini
- 🇿🇦 A struggle veteran and participant in the 1956 March on the Union Building, Mrs Rajambal Kolapan
- 🇿🇦 Distinguished leaders of the #Fees Must Fall student movement, Ms Nompandolo Mkatshwa and Ms Shaeera Kalla, as well as our very own student leader and Deputy Secretary of Unisa National SRC, Ms Nontsikelelo Nako
- 🇿🇦 Our former First Lady and founding member of SAWID, Mrs Zanele Mbeki

- 🇲🇦 Let me also acknowledge some of struggle veterans in attendance, ie, Mesdames Violet Sarah Matlou and Grace Masuku
- 🇲🇦 Current and former leaders of government and business
- 🇲🇦 Members of Unisa Council in attendance
- 🇲🇦 Members of the diplomatic corps and representatives of various international and multilateral organizations
- 🇲🇦 Members of political and civil society organizations
- 🇲🇦 Members of broadcast, print and online media
- 🇲🇦 To our SAWID partners
- 🇲🇦 Members of the Unisa community including executives, staff and students
- 🇲🇦 Distinguished members of this audience and those following this event through broadcasts and online media

As I welcome you to this august and historic occasion that commemorates 60 years since the epic March of Women to the

Apartheid seat of government, I am filled with a deep sense of joy and I embrace all of you in the spirit of Ubuntu.

In the presence of the doyennes of our anti-apartheid and women's struggle for justice who, through their great sacrifices, gave direction to the future that we long for.

It is often hard to believe that six decades ago more than 20,000 women took a stand and marched against the apartheid regime. This evolved because in our patriarchal society much of our struggle history and master narrative of humanity's struggle for justice often privileges and foregrounds the heroism of men, while women are a relegated, invisible and subservient majority.

We are gathered here today to pay tribute to the midwives of our democracy and the flowers of our revolution. As we count the gains of

our freedom in terms of our progressive constitution that recognizes women's rights, and as we celebrate the number of women who occupy leadership positions in our government and the private sector, we must always be reminded of the often untold courage and sacrifice of women in our anti-colonial, anti-apartheid and anti-patriarchal struggles.

As I stand here today I am reminded of millions of women who have suffered and continue to suffer exploitation, gender-based violence, trafficking and all kinds of brutal oppression. Progress has indeed been made but the gruesome pain and suffering experienced by Sara Baartman more than 200 years ago is still the experience of many women and girls in many parts of our country and the world.

As I reflect on this history, my mind wanders into the distant pre-colonial African past when women leaders distinguished themselves,

only to disappear in the pages of our historical records and mainstream literature. I am reminded of the Ethiopian Queen of Sheba, Queen Zinga Mbande of Mbundu Kingdom in Angola, Queen Manthatisi of the Batlokwa, Queen Mother Labotsibeni Mdluli of the Swazi, Queen Nandi and Princess Mkabayi of the Zulu and Queen Nonesi of the Mthembu.

In our modern struggle against colonialism and apartheid we should not forget the towering role played by Charlotte Maxeke, Ida Mntwana, Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph, Albertina Sisulu, Miriam Makeba, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Mrs Adelaide Tambo and countless others who have graced this special occasion today. We have come this far as a country in terms of gender equality because we were lifted by the broad shoulders of these great women. We can see further because we are sitting on the shoulders of these giants who, through their march, made huge strides in our journey towards justice. We salute our heroines.

We are encouraged by an increase in the number of women in leadership positions throughout the world, with Britain having just joined the league, and the United Nations and USA poised to join this league. It has been a sense of pride and joy to see our keynote speaker, Dr Phumzile Mlambo Ngcuka, assume her current leadership position at the UN and Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma as the chairperson of the AU Commission. But these great women are powerless if they are not undergirded and supported by a strong movement for gender justice on the ground.

Given the current levels of gender-based violence, the rate of women's HIV/Aids infection, the underpayment of women doing the same jobs as men and the prevailing glass ceiling, given the prejudice against women who seek a better education, such as Malala, then it is clear that the struggle continues and the current generation of leaders will

have to take the baton from the preceding generation. It is for this reason that Unisa felt that a partnership with SAWID, which already has a proven record in empowering women and championing gender justice, is of great significance in maximizing our joint efforts. We hope to see greater successes from this relationship and the Unisa Women's Forum, Institute for Gender Studies and other related units and departments will play a crucial role in sustaining our partnership with SAWID. Let me also express our strong desire to maintain our relationship with the UN Women's Unit as a united campaign to tackle gender issues.

To mark this historic month, Unisa and SAWID could not have chosen a more distinguished person as our keynote speaker. Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka does not only come from our South African and African tradition of struggle for gender justice, but now has a global perspective as the head of the Women's Programme in the UN. We

look forward to an intellectually stimulating presentation and engagement. Reflections from veterans of women's struggle and leaders of contemporary struggles set the stage for a rich inter-generational conversation and a symbolic passing of the baton.

I would like to close Susan Anthony's perceptive proclamation that "The day will come when man will recognize woman as his peer, not only at the fireside, but in councils of the nation. Then, and not until then, will there be perfect comradeship, the ideal union between sexes that shall result in the highest development of the race."

Let the symbolic march begin. Let ideas flourish. Let the pollen of this conversation produce the blossoming of a thousand flowers.

I thank you

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