



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MANDLA MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

OPENING AND WELCOME REMARKS

Theme: The National Question, Peace and Democracy in Africa

10th Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Annual Lecture

ZK Matthews Great Hall

24 May 2019

- Programme Director, Dr Somadoda Fikeni: Special Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of South Africa
- Our esteemed keynote speaker, this evening, H.E. Hailemariam Desalegn, Former Prime Minister of Ethiopia
- President Thabo Mbeki, former President of South Africa, Patron of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation and Chancellor of the University of South Africa

- Mr Sakhi Simelane, Chairperson of Unisa Council and all the other members of Council
- Dr Brigalia Bam, Chairperson of The Board of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation and all the other members of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation
- Mr Max Boqwana, the CEO of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation and your team
- Members of diplomatic corps
- Ms Thoko Didiza, Member of Parliament and the NEC of the ANC
- Panel members for our presentation today:–
 - Ms Liepolo Pheko (facilitator)
 - Ms Christine Qunta and Prof Jimi Adesina (panellists)
- Members of the Unisa executive and members of Unisa family
- Members of the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute, TMALI
- Members of government, political formations, civil society and business sector
- President of the NSRC, Mr Wadzanai Mazhetese and the members of the NSRC, members of RSRCs and student leaders of all political formations in attendance today
- Leaders of Organised Labour
- Members of the media

- Fellow Africans, distinguished guests here in this audience and those watching the proceedings on live broadcast

A very warm welcome to you all.

Tonight is a very special night, ladies and gentlemen, because we are celebrating a decade of TMAI excellence, and you'll understand therefore, when I say that the University of South Africa and the Thabo Mbeki Foundation are especially honoured to be hosting this 10th *Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture*. Long may it continue! This ought to be a launching pad for our creative imagination on what it should evolve into in the next ten years. It has not escaped my mind that this is also happening on the eve of the inauguration of South African president to head the sixth administration in our democratic transition since 1994 or 25 years ago.

This evening's lecture will add yet another layer to the critical conversations that we as Africans must have as we explore and confront our pasts, interrogate the present and shape the future. Given this historical moment, immediate post our elections, still in a state of deep introspection and analysis, shaped by acute socio-economic and political challenges, as well as rising opportunities facing the African Continent, this lecture is particularly apposite. We gather here today in a year when

quite a considerable number of African countries are holding their elections, something that has become a common and regular feature of this wave of multi-party democracy since the early 1990s.

This evening's theme speaks to the breadth and depth of the challenges we face as a Continent. 25 Years post democracy the "national question" remains as intractable as ever and one cannot but wonder what the late Neville Alexander would have had to say about this thorny issue which continues to bubble under, rising with unsettling regularity each time we experience societal disruptions or transformation imperatives such as our national elections or *decoloniality*, which only serve to emphasise our inability to deal with it resolutely. Perhaps we need to ask ourselves with painful honesty if there is in fact an appropriate balance of power and influence among all people in this nation state and on the Continent. How do we build a sense of genuine nationhood? Can we do so given the stubborn legacies of separation and exclusion which seem to transcend time and successive generations? How do we strengthen national unity, coherence, functionality and pride in the extent that it gains a universal legitimacy and uptake? Is this possible?

The same applies to notions of *Peace* and *Democracy* on our Continent. One would be hard pressed to find general agreement on the shape of

exercise of African democracy, so widely do conceptualisation and practices differ on the Continent; and peace of course, seems to be the analogous *Holy Grail*. Everyone seems to be looking for it but no-one seems to be closer to finding it. But can we honestly assert that the rest of the world is any better off at this juncture?

The generation of an ongoing, unstoppable conversational momentum of these Africa Day lectures provides a necessary framework for stocktaking, provocation, engagement, debate, deliberate disruption - and a timely call to action. The calibre of global and continental icons that have been attracted by the Thabo Mbeki Foundation and Unisa is concrete proof of the strategic choice that the University made when it partnered with the TMF and established TMALI. The Africa focus of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation and TMALI find a natural and organic synergy with Unisa whose main strategic intent, as articulated in its vision statement, is to be "The African University shaping futures in the service of humanity." The synergies between Thabo Mbeki Foundation's Africa focus and those of Unisa strategy as well as the fact that President Thabo Mbeki is recognized worldwide as the preeminent champion of African Renaissance in the 21st century Africa is an amazing convergence of common purpose hence its yielding such consequential events as the lecture we have tonight.

We are proud and excited about making that contribution, and you will therefore appreciate it when I say that it is a great honour and privilege to extend a warm African welcome to all of you as our honoured guests on the occasion of the 10th Thabo Mbeki Africa Day Lecture. I would like to note, with much appreciation, all the dignitaries and diplomats in our midst. I trust that the warmth of the greeting which we at Unisa and Thabo Mbeki Foundation extend to you this evening, will reassure you of our truly (South) African and African embrace. *You are all most welcome.*

A special welcome to the patron of The Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute and Unisa's own Chancellor, President Thabo Mbeki, who, in a very real sense, has become part of the Unisa family. That you always make time to be with us in this institution on occasions like this, despite your heavy international, continental and national commitments, is profoundly significant, speaking as it does to your love for, and dedication to, the people of this country and continent. Your presence is a fitting tribute too, to the rationale for the celebration of Africa Day; the celebration of *African unity*. Your dedication to the African cause beyond your years of the presidency is an indication of a deep conviction of the mission of the African Renaissance and endeavours to achieve the

lofty goal of making the 21st century an African Century. We thank you President Mbeki.

Mindful of the fact that our keynote speaker and special guest, Former Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, His Excellency, Hailemariam Desalegn, is to be introduced, I extend to you a heartfelt welcome to South Africa and the University of South Africa. We are honoured Excellency, by the presence of an African leader and scholar of your international stature and repute, whose life and works are a symbol of hope to humanity. Your country, Ethiopia, also holds a special place in this country and the continent not only as the seat of the African Union but also for its rich history and heritage as well as the role it played in the anti-apartheid and anti-colonial struggle at the time when most African countries had not attained their independence.

This 10th Africa Day Lecture comes at a time of unprecedented flux in our continental socio-economic and political fortunes. On our Continent alone, there have been and will be in the region of 20 elections this year. Not only that, but one discerns very clearly in the global context, similar signs - portents perhaps – of a world on the cusp of a profound reorientation and reorganization along new lines. The extent of that transformational momentum varies greatly, but it cannot be ignored,

because it is against this background that our quest for the African Renaissance, and endeavors to make real the promise of claiming the 21st Century as an African century, has to be contextualized.

Distinguished guests, tonight's lecture will undoubtedly be a celebration of the intellectual and the political; an exposition of some of the most pressing and intractable question on the Continent, which are central to our own respective experiences and futures – for the Africa we want.

Agenda 2063 states those aspirations as follows:

1. A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development
2. An integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance
3. An Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law
4. A peaceful and secure Africa
5. An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics
6. An Africa whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children

7. Africa as a strong, united and influential global player and partner

This lecture will also give us a gauge of the Africa Rising narrative as well as our collective aspiration to overcome challenges to make this an African Century as President Thabo Mbeki once proclaimed. This evening's address and discussion will undoubtedly help us to refocus on these genuinely noble aspirations, offer food for thought as we chart the way forward, and prompt some healthy self-examination and introspection around our roles as individuals and as leaders, intellectuals and responsible citizens in the renewal of our country and our Continent.

I thank you