



NBI AGREEMENT LAUNCH
15TH APRIL 2015
KGORONG FUNCTION HALL

Good morning ladies and gentlemen

Most of my speeches start with a reflection on how honoured I am to be part of the specific gathering that I am addressing. However, this morning I want to say that I am truly honoured, especially privileged and singularly proud to be a part of this very exciting and ground-breaking initiative at Unisa.

Since the adoption of the Unisa Living Green concept in 2011 and the Green Economy and Sustainability Engagement Model in 2013, Unisa has undertaken a number of green initiatives, including the hosting of an electric vehicle roadshow on the campus in June 2013 and implementing an environmentally friendly waste management system.

Through the Green Economy and Sustainability Engagement Model, Unisa has a long term vision to address issues of sustainability as is done in many successful private entities. Unisa also looks forward to embedding this critical sustainability culture across its community.

Prior to the approval of the Unisa Living Green concept and the Green Economy and Sustainability Engagement Model, the main risks and threat to sustainability initiatives was the lack of a formal institutional framework and structure dedicated to the green economy and sustainability interventions. In addition, the absence of a co-ordinated plan and implementation approach resulted in an *ad hoc* series of activities. Whilst the Environmental (Sustainability) Policy was approved with specific operational plans regarding targeted achievements, the absence of subsidiary policies, strategies and procedures was a limitation. Since the latter part of 2013 dedicated resources have been assigned to ensure the co-ordination and implementation of the Green Economy and Sustainability Engagement Model. Within a few months, a Sustainability Framework, constituting the parameters for the sustainability drive of Unisa under the Green Economy and Sustainability Engagement Model, was developed and approved. The aim of the Sustainability Framework is to provide a road map for sustainability that focuses, in a tangible manner, on the University's efforts to meet its commitment to ensuring a sustainable future, and increasing awareness of and commitment to sustainability and informing Unisa's responses to issues related to sustainability.

Unisa can proudly say that it is the first university in South Africa to sign up to the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC). In 2011 Unisa participated in the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP 17) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. Today, Unisa has published numerous publications on sustainable development, We are, in fact, the only higher education institution in South Africa that has developed its own co-ordinated sustainability initiative. Given the leadership role that Unisa has adopted in this area, it was just natural for the university to approach the National Business Initiative (NBI), through the Exxaro Chair in Business and Climate Change hosted in the College of Economic and Management Sciences, when it became aware of its Private Sector Energy Efficiency (PSEE) programme. The aim of the Private Sector Energy Efficiency programme is to improve energy efficiency by

assisting organisations to identify and implement energy saving measures slotted in neatly with a number of the strategies in the Sustainability Framework. The Unisa/NBI Private Sector Energy Efficiency programme stands out as a flagship throughout the country and possibly Africa as this is the first time this kind of partnership is taking place in higher education.

The truth is that there has been, and still is, much confusion amongst the general public, on precisely what sustainability is despite the huge amount of work and energy that has gone into raising awareness and creating a common and incrementally expansive and inclusive global agenda – since at least 1987! As higher education institutions, we have a leading role to play in embracing the mission of transformation towards sustainability. Tilbury asserts [that]

Sustainability challenges current paradigms and structures, as well as dominant patterns in higher education. Though international declarations provide visible commitment encouraging progress, they are not sufficient to change institutional and disciplinary practices in higher education. Achievements have been random, and mostly disconnected from the core business of higher education, usually engaging minority groups, failing to reach the core of staff, students and stakeholders or influence the culture of institutions.... the majority of universities ...are preoccupied with greening of the campus through minimizing waste and energy consumption, developing low carbon buildings and modelling sustainability to influence the behaviour of students and staff. ¹

Part of the reason for this narrow focus, is that we often see sustainability as an add-on, rather than an integral aspect of higher education.

At Unisa, the institution of a Sustainability Office in the Office of the Vice Principal Advisory and Assurance Services is a demonstration of our commitment to this

¹ Tilbury, D in Granados, Jesús, Fredi, Jonathan. Higher Education in the World4, Higher Education's Commitment to Sustainability: From Understanding to Action.
<http://www.guninetwork.org/guni.toolboxes/he-articles/higher-education-in-the-world-4>

project. Council has approved the Unisa Environmental Policy and we have our own environmental risk register with mitigating strategies and actions, which is developed on the platform of the policy. The project entrenching environmental governance at Unisa is still in its infancy but we are building on a sound foundation. Our LivingGreen website was launched and we are currently looking at the key imperatives that contribute to our carbon footprint. The million dollar question that is going to follow is: how do we mitigate it and that's another reason why the agreement with NBI is so opportune.

Obviously, as a university, our contribution to the body of knowledge is important. Our colleges have begun to audit their contributions to the discourse on sustainability and are recommending that students across all disciplines explore and research environmental or sustainability issues. We are "thinking green" and incorporating green initiatives into our division and departmental plans. At an institutional level, we have major initiatives, at considerable cost, in our spatial planning and infrastructure development that is working towards greener buildings. In addition to our green research projects Unisa has no less than 20 community engagement projects on sustainable development.

From this Unisa/NBI Private Sector Energy Efficiency programme, Unisa hopes to continue imparting its leadership in the green economy and sustainability space. I am very comfortable in the knowledge that Unisa has a great team of champions and I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all of them - their continued support in ensuring that Unisa realizes its vision to take green economy and sustainability issues to the next levels has not gone unnoticed. They remind me of the wisdom spoken by our late President Mandela who said:

You can never have an impact on society if you have not changed yourself.

Colleagues, we are all here because **we want** to see change – we acknowledge the issues and the challenges, I believe that we are ready for the next step and

that is: to make an impact on society at Unisa, in South Africa, and why not even globally.

THANK YOU

