



*The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor*

**PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR**

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

**WELCOMING REMARKS, UNISA 145 YEARS BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION**

**ZK MATHEWS GREAT HALL, THEO VAN WIJK BUILDING, UNISA**

**MUCKLENEUK CAMPUS**

**4 July 2018 at 09:30**

- Programme Director: Dr Somadoda Fikeni, Director: Special Projects and Advisor to the Principal and Vice Chancellor
- His Excellency, Dr Thabo Mbeki, Chancellor of the University of South Africa, Patron of the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute and Former President of the Republic of South Africa
- The Honourable Minister Naledi Pandor, MP, Minister of Higher Education and Training

- Mr Sakhi Simelane, Chairperson of Unisa Council and members of the Unisa Council here present
- Your excellencies, high commissioners and ambassadors present
- Members of Unisa's executive and extended management
- Ms Zandile Sodladla the President of Unisa National Student Representative Council and all members of the NSRC
- Mr Mhlungu, President of Convention
- Representatives from national and local government
- Members of the business community
- Representatives from various Institutions of higher learning
- The delegation attending the Inbound Economic Modelling and Benchmarking Conference 2018, which is hosted by the office of the Executive Mayor: City of Tshwane
- Unisa staff and students, including members of our Unisa family in the regions who are sharing our celebrations via satellite
- Leaders of Organised Labour
- Our entertainers, whom I am advised comprise Unisa staff and students
- Distinguished members of the audience

Celebratory greetings to you all, and a very warm welcome on what must be the coldest week in South Africa this year. I trust that today's events

will impart a lingering warmth to us all. And yet, in the midst of the cold, we are all rejoicing at the news of the desperately needed good rains in Cape Town and the relief that they will undoubtedly bring to our fellow citizens from that province.

And in that context, it is not that difficult to link this traditional African symbol of blessing with Unisa's genesis in that same city, one hundred and forty-five years ago. Unisa too, has been, and continues to be a national asset and blessing. And while I'm sure we all know Unisa's fascinating and illustrious history by now, it bears repeating that Unisa was the progenitor of the Universities of Stellenbosch and Cape Town, and later, the Universities of Witwatersrand, Pretoria, Natal (UKZN), Orange Free State (UFS), Rhodes and Potchefstroom (UNW), which were all previously affiliated colleges. What many do not know either, is that when the former government tried to compel Unisa to become an Afrikaans-only institution, the Institution refused and this resulted in the establishment of the *Rand Afrikaanse Universiteit*, now a transformed University of Johannesburg. So Chancellor, while we and I want to quote you Mr Chancellor "*owe my (and in this case our) being to the hills and the valleys, the mountains and the glades, the rivers, the deserts, the trees, the flowers, the seas and the ever-changing seasons that define the face of our native land*", a large number of the universities in South

Africa, owe their being – to Unisa! So a special warm welcome to all of you colleagues from our sister institutions who are present among us today – we are family in the deepest sense of the word!

Clearly, Unisa’s roots are deeply embedded in our African soil. This University has nourished - and been nourished - by many generations of scholars; evident in the hundreds of thousands of Unisa graduates who represent every strata in society and who are to be found in all echelons of society and public and private enterprise around the world – and who have served and achieved with distinction. I think that you will agree that this is an amazing accomplishment and an amazing contribution! And still Unisa vision is to be “the African university shaping futures in the service of humanity” - accessible to all who qualify for university admission and committed to serving our country and Continent.

But ladies and gentlemen, as we celebrate our illustrious history and legacy, let us not forget about the equally illustrious future that we are shaping and driving as we speak. One can rely on the influence and sway of a legacy for only so long before it becomes a crutch - perhaps even an excuse - for a lack of vision and action that is focused on a vibrant productive and engaged future. When that happens, the demise is inevitable.

That is why you will find that our strategy is firmly focused on the attainment of an unapologetically African university that is undergirded and driven by innovation, creativity and deliberate transformation. Unisa aims to be a beacon of quality and excellence in teaching and learning, research and innovation and community engagement - at the vanguard of South Africa's and Africa's renewal.

To achieve this, we are committed to harnessing the capacities of a huge array of stakeholders whom we have found, are very keen to play their part in rebuilding our country and Continent. In fact, the variety of representatives that have joined us today, speak precisely to our view that we are a University *of* the people and *for* the people in the broadest sense, and we will work together with anyone whose vision for our country and her people is consonant with Unisa's vision. While Unisa may be the biggest role player in South Africa's higher education *sector* we nevertheless form an integral part of South Africa's Higher education *system*, and together we must ensure the kind of transformation that will take us forward to the desired end-state of quality and excellent education. And yes, there is much to do, but I am proud to say that we have begun in a very concrete and visible manner, to implement the changes that are required to ensure that transformation.

We are deeply committed to ensuring that we build on the legacy of those who have gone before, and that “brand Unisa” will continue to elicit the respect and admiration which it does, across the Continent and the world.

And so yes, we do indeed have reason to celebrate! It is a genuine pleasure, not to mention a relief, to be able to take a brief break, and rejoice at the achievement of 145 years of consistent performance and contribution. We are excited and we are proud of this matriarch of our society and major pillar of our national development – of the University of South Africa.

Today’s programme will offer a far more exciting and informative insight into this wonderful university than that which I am able to provide in the limited time at my disposal. Suffice to say that we count it a great honour to be a part of this unique family and this unique institution, and we are honoured that you too, individually and collectively, are once again a part of our journey and our legacy to our country, our continent and the world. We welcome everyone most warmly and we look forward to more of the same.

I thank you