

## MEDIA ADVISORY

### INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY

ATTENTION: EDITORS, PRODUCERS, SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL REPORTERS  
20 February 2019

Thursday, 21 February 2019 marks International Mother Language Day. To celebrate the day, the University of South Africa (Unisa), in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Puku Children's Literature Foundation, will host a roundtable discussion under the theme '*My language, my heritage: promoting children's literature and reading in South Africa's indigenous languages*'.

International Mother Language Day originated in Bangladesh in 1952 and was officially launched by UNESCO in 1999. This day has been commemorated annually ever since on 21 February, and aims to encourage linguistic diversity and fuller awareness of cultural traditions in over 215 countries around the world.

The United Nations has declared 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages. The resolution, co-authored by Bolivia and Ecuador, stresses the urgent need to promote, preserve and revitalise indigenous languages:

Given the acute problems of access to indigenous language content for children in South Africa and in the Southern African Development Community (SADEC) region, Unisa is seeking a collaborative approach to bring about increased investment in book production and reading in our indigenous languages, including the endangered languages.

Weighing in on the importance of this matter, Professor Mandla Makhanya, Unisa's Principal and Vice-Chancellor, said that language is pivotal in the areas of human rights protection, good governance, peace building, reconciliation, and sustainable development. 'It is through language that we communicate with the world, define our identity, express our history and culture, learn, defend our human rights and participate in all aspects of society,' he said. 'Through language, people preserve their community's history, customs and traditions, memory, unique modes of thinking, meaning and expression.'

The roundtable discussion will serve as a launch pad for a series of initiatives to be hosted during the International Year of Indigenous Languages.

The roundtable discussion will take place as follows:

Date: 21 February 2019

Time: 10:00 – 14:00 (followed by a light lunch)

Venue: Mphebatho restaurant, 3rd floor, Theo van Wijk Building, Unisa, Preller St, Muckleneuk



Members of the media are invited to attend the event.

To RSVP and/or request interviews, please contact Mr Tommy Huma (Senior Media Liaison Officer) on 012 429 3981 / 072 218 6197 / [humatm@unisa.ac.za](mailto:humatm@unisa.ac.za)

**- Ends-**

**Issued by:**

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