



*The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor*

**PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR**  
**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**  
**CONGRATULATIONS: FEROZA ADAMS MEMORIAL LECTURE AND**  
**UNISA WOMAN OF THE YEAR AWARD CEREMONY**  
**RECEPTION HALL, KGORONG BUILDING**  
**14 August 2018**

- Madam Programme Director, Prof Meahabo Magano
- Chairperson of Unisa Women's Forum, Dr Sheila Kumalo
- Our keynote speaker, Ms Refilwe Machete
- The Unisa Women's Forum Executive and members
- Our most distinguished and most deserving nominees and winners of the Unisa women of the year
- And distinguished audience

Warm greetings to you all, and thank you Ms Machete, for an inspiring address.

In the midst of what is turning out to be another dismal year for Women's Rights in South Africa, this celebration has provided a brief respite, reminding us of the huge capacity for transformation and progress that resides in Unisa women, and of course, South African women. And so it is my genuine pleasure to be able to congratulate our Unisa Women nominees and awardees for 2018, on their achievements and successes.

Last month (on 23 July to be precise) I came across the following headline in a News 24 article on the release of the Stats SA Mid-Year Population Estimate Report: ***“South Africa is young and female.”*** The report went on to share that “there are 57.7 million people in South Africa – up from 56.5 million people in 2017 – and more than half of the population (51%) is female. Coupled with this, the report states that women live, on average, six years longer than men, with a life expectancy of 67.3 years compared to 61.1 years for males.” But on an interesting note, our fertility rates continue to decline – and these have never been high to begin with – down from 2.68 children per woman in 2009 to 2.40 in 2018.

So what does that mean for you as Unisa women, and what does it mean for South African women? Well, for one thing, each time you enter a room; each time you sit in a meeting; each time you sit in a boardroom; each time you sit on a selection committee, each time you cast your vote, in any election - look about you and ask: “Where are the women?” In terms of population demographics and by the way, equity ratios, there should be an even split between male and female. But is that the case – ever?

So, what are you going to do about it? When it comes to change I know of very few instances where people are willing to hand over, or share power; even where there is legislation in place to facilitate such a transformation. In most cases, transformation has to be driven and in this instance, I would like to suggest that it is Unisa women who will have to bring about the change that you would like to see. Having a 51% representation does not mean 51% in the secretary or administrative pool. It means 51% *across the board*.

That means, Unisa women, that you will have to start looking at the world, and our university through new and different lenses – through visionary and strategic lenses, which acknowledge the very real fact that the women in this room and women of a similar age cohort across the country, are going to be increasingly responsible – not only for leading this University and this country, but also for growing and

nurturing succeeding generations of women into positions of leadership and power. And I refer here to both staff and students.

It is women such as yourselves – this generation - who must ensure that the status quo is broken decisively, and that the road is cleared and paved for those who must follow. But at the same time I doubt that South African women have ever been under greater onslaught from South African men. So you will need to prevail and rise above these dark times – as you have done before – and harnessing your collective and singular determination, chart your own destiny – with or without those men who seem so hell-bent on the destruction of their own wives, sisters, daughters and mothers.

Women have collective power and potential for the transformation, growth and development of our countries and our Continent. But all too often, in unpacking the potential of women in society, we focus on the challenges to the extent that they can sometimes overshadow the achievements of those women who are leading very successful and fulfilled lives. At our university, so far this year, we have honoured many powerful and high achieving colleagues whose achievements are a testament to the value that women bring to our society.

Women at Unisa have done us proud and women in South Africa have done us proud. And as much as we must indeed deal with our

challenges, and as much as we need to tackle these vigorously in a planned and systematic manner, so too we must make spaces to celebrate and acknowledge our high achievers, our powerful and our triumphant women.

But a word to the wise ladies. I have noticed a very uncomfortable trend at Unisa – that of female bullies. It is an embarrassing truth that over the last few years I have been receiving a growing number of complaints from staff – both male and female – about female bullying – currently more so than males. This is something that needs to be nipped in the bud. It is an unfortunate reality that these kinds of behaviours and power plays, damage the cause and the transformation agenda of women empowerment and development, at Unisa and of course, in the country. The simple truth is that bullies will never earn the kind of respect that is necessary for effective and enduring leadership, and it really has no place in our institution. This is something that we all need to work on.

But on a positive note, this is definitely not something that one associates with our nominees and awardees today! Our nominees and awardees this year speak to the flourishing of the many initiatives that we have in place at Unisa to advance women and black women in particular, in leadership and in their careers; to the maturing of Unisa women into a more active expression of their rights and their abilities;

and to the ownership of Unisa women of their space in the university. Our awardees are women who, in fulfilling their daily responsibilities, have grown as achievers, leaders and as servants of the people. They have demonstrated by dint of their nominations that their peers acknowledge them as Unisa leaders and colleagues in the truest sense of the word; serving others and honouring their responsibility to be the best that they can be. They have, and we have, every right to be proud and to celebrate this moment of acknowledgement.

I thank you.