



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MS MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE CHANCELLOR
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA
ADDRESS: GRADUATION CEREMONY - YOUNG WOMEN IN POWER
(COINCIDING WITH THE LAUNCH OF YALI AFRICA)
KGORONG BUILDING, MUCKLENEUK CAMPUS
17 April 2019

Thanks Programme Director, Ms Cristal Peterson, Deputy Director of the Directorate of Communications and Marketing: UNISA GSBL

- His Excellency, Dr Shiferaw Teklemariam, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE)
- Ms Rebecca Krzywda, Deputy Mission Director and all USAID representatives present
- Dr Shola Safo-Duodu, Chief of Party: YALI West Africa, and all YALI representatives present

- Mr Richard Nelson, Deputy Coordinator: Power Africa and all Power Africa representatives present
- Members of the Executive of GSBL
- Family, guardians and friends of our YALI graduandi
- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

It is a pleasure to welcome you all to this very special occasion.

If we look at the gender split in Africa, we note that we are almost *level-pegging*, but with women marginally outpacing men. However, if we look at employment statistics, particularly with regard to leadership and other senior positions of power in the public and private sectors, then a very different picture emerges. Men dominate heavily in these spheres. We all know that: it is why we are here this evening. That status must be redressed. So tonight I will not speak directly to the gender issues. We have a veritable feast of august speakers whom I am sure, will do that with far great insight and wisdom. What I would like to do though is touch on your roles as future leaders - women leaders - in a rapidly transforming world. What kind of world are you inheriting and what kind of world will you be contributing to as leaders in your specific sphere of expertise and influence?

Now think of this. Did you know that 41% of the African Population is under the age of 15? In fact, the mean age of the continent is only 18!

(Some statistics set it at 19.) A number of reputable bodies predict that our continent's population will reach *2.4 billion* by 2050. By 2100, more than half of the world's *growth* is expected to have come from Africa, reaching 4.1 billion people by 2100 to claim *over 1/3 of the world's population*. And the active working age population (25-64 years) has grown more rapidly than any other age group, from 123.7 million (33.3 per cent) in 1980 to 425.7 million (36.2 per cent) in 2015. How much larger is that figure right now?

These are hugely sobering statistics ladies and gentlemen.

Both nationally and continentally, we find ourselves in a situation where we have a very small cohort of some very, very, senior leaders, making decisions about the future of the overwhelming majority of our citizens. This is obviously not a sustainable model of leadership, especially when we see that there is an absolute dearth of excellent young leaders. As things stand currently, we will end up with a leadership vacuum within the next decade or so, which poses a real danger of precipitating numerous continental and national conflicts and crises.

You will therefore appreciate just how important this programme is on a number of levels. Our Continent desperately needs young, well trained leaders across all spheres of endeavor. We desperately need large numbers of well-trained *female* leaders who can shatter glass

ceilings, break stereotyping and disrupt the ongoing legacy of patriarchy that continues to blight our continent in instances where this is exercised for power and domination rather than the flourishing of our citizens. The YALI Regional Leadership Centres have an important task to fulfil. Their efforts will undoubtedly be bolstered with the launch of YALI Africa, which represents the joined forces of the four YALI Regional Centres. We at the University of South Africa are pleased to play our role in this initiative, which we believe will lend much needed impetus to leadership development on the Continent.

I'm not going to make any jokes about power except to say that you only realise its value and importance when you don't have it! With the graduation of this cohort of young women, our Continent will have taken a very significant step in supporting the career development of a new generation of women leaders in the energy sector, who are now better equipped and positioned to contribute towards its growth and development. The University of South Africa is firmly geared to the future and committed to playing its role in this process. We believe that we are growing tomorrow's great leaders, businessmen and women, scholars, servants of the people, and visionaries – as a university, *and* in collaboration with continental entities who share our goals and our vision to be *the African university shaping futures in the service of humanity*. We are a University that is *of* the people and *for* the people of this country and continent and the world. We

therefore look forward to sharing in the graduations of many more leaders in future, across YALI's three tracks of Business Entrepreneurship, Civic Leadership and Public Policy and management. As a country and Continent we must say, young women – and men – future leaders, we need you.

It is therefore my very pleasant privilege to congratulate you pre-emptively and to wish you all well in your future endeavours. We look forward to hearing many success stories from this group of young women and sharing in the benefits of the contributions that you will undoubtedly make to our Continent.

I thank you.