



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

**“THE DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION FOR LATIN
AMERICA AND CARRIBBEAN HEADS OF MISSIONS”
Convened by Institute for Global Dialogue and Unisa**

Prof MS Makhanya

Principal and Vice Chancellor

Welcome and Opening Address

27 March 2015

- Chair of the programme and a distinguished scholar of world politics in your own right, Francis A. Kornegay
- His Excellency and the Dean of Latin America and Caribbean Diplomatic Corps and Argentinian Ambassador to South Africa, Mr. Renato Carlos Sersale Di Cerisano
- Your excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners in your various portfolios representing your respective missions.
- The Executive Dean of the College of Graduate Studies at Unisa and a distinguished scholar, Prof Greg Cuthbertson
- Executive Director of the Institute for Global Dialogue and a dynamic leader who is also a solid scholar on African and global politics, Dr Siphamandla Zondi.
- Members of Unisa's executive and extended management
- Unisa academic and support staff
- Students
- Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

Let me attempt to greet you in your various languages

Good Morning

Buenos Dias (in spanish)

Bom Dia (in Portugeuse)

Goedemorgen (in Dutch)

My effort is a modest way of demonstrating the importance of multi-cultural consciousness and cosmopolitan appreciation of global diversity of humanity. The global icon and an international statesman, former President Nelson Mandela, was particularly sensitive to this fact when he spoke of the importance of languages in communication. He advised us that

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”

As I welcome you to Unisa and to this diplomatic reception and a consultative meeting that is organized for Latin America and Caribbean Heads of Missions I hope our hospitality will go into your hearts even though engagements will still be a cerebral function of the head. It gives me a great joy to welcome you to this auspicious occasion that the Institute for Global Dialogue (IDG) in association with the University of South Africa has organized for you. We want you to embrace the fact that South Africa, the University of South Africa and the Institute for Global Dialogue (IGD) will be your home away from home during

the years that you will be representing your various countries and regions. Embedded in the African philosophy is the concept of Ubuntu/botho that is roughly translated to mean “I am because we are”, it emphasises the interdependence of humanity as well as the ecological harmony between human beings, other animals and nature in general. We welcome you in this spirit of Ubuntu/botho to a University whose vision statement is “The African University shaping futures in the service of humanity.” When we craft our mission and our programmes we often translate this vision statement to give it a concrete practical expression. Unisa is the oldest university of South Africa and is the largest university in South Africa, Africa and the Southern Hemisphere, and even more important, it has a global footprint. Most of South Africa’s prominent former political prisoners such as the late President Nelson Mandela, studied through Unisa during their years of imprisonment, thus affirming Unisa as their only intellectual home and window to the world of ideas. It is for the aforementioned reasons that our global and internationalist orientation comes naturally.

I also want to commend the Institute for Global Dialogue, under the visionary leadership of Dr Siphamandla Zondi, for being such a valuable

partner for Unisa, virtually turning Unisa into an intellectual capital of diplomats. We also appreciate the longstanding support that we often receive from our diplomatic missions whenever we have events at Unisa. Unisa recently decided to revive and re-launch the Unisa Centre for Latin American Studies as a platform for cutting-edge research and a catalyst for conversations, cultural and educational exchange initiatives. The Institute for Global Dialogue is charged with coordinating this revitalization process. Dr Zondi will speak to some of the salient factors that have necessitated Unisa to revive the programme. But this centre will be greatly enriched by your insights and inputs as it will, inter alia, be an important intellectual resource for your various missions as it will also inform South African, and possibly, African policy initiatives towards Latin America and the Caribbean region. Pretoria hosts 133 embassies and High Commissions, one of the greatest concentrations of diplomatic missions in the world. Unisa's main campus and administrative centre is in the same city hence the natural synergies of your interests and our interest as a knowledge generating and teaching and learning institution.

I just want to highlight briefly a few aspects of the ties that bind us as well as areas of logical common interests as these regions of the world.

During the darkest moments of South Africa's political history of apartheid the world witnessed human solidarity on an unprecedented scale when people and governments from your various countries stood up to confront that which was declared by the United Nations as a crime against humanity. Our triumph over apartheid was also your victory and ultimately humanity's victory. It is for this reason that South Africans belong to the world and are welcoming to the world through initiatives such as this one. Your solidarity is best captured in the words of poet, John Donne, who in his now famous poem, For Whom The Bell Tolls, proclaims that

“No man is an island, entire to itself;

Every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main, ...

Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind,

And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls;

It tolls for thee.”

Indeed the world community never asked for whom the bell or apartheid chains were, they assumed our pain and we became one in the finest moment of human solidarity in human history.

Most of Latin American countries went through authoritarian regimes of different typologies in the 1970s and 1980s and they also experimented with many development paradigms. These regions are in transition into democracy and have experimented with development programmes from which South Africa and the African continent can learn.

Through slavery and subsequent waves of migration, there is a large population of people of African origin in the Caribbean and Latin American regions, and this diaspora is also recognized as a region that is an integral part of the African Union. We share a history, we share cultures, we share commercial relations and even more important in a globalized world, we ought to share a common destiny as humanity. We often forget the fact that Haiti became the very first African Republic when slaves revolted and overthrew the slave masters and slave shackles. This would inspire a generation of anti-colonial struggles across the African continent. The political leaders such as Marcus Garvey and Rastafarian Cultural Movement led by Bob Marley, are some of very powerful political and cultural waves that influenced Africa and the rest of the world in a profound manner.

There are intellectual traditions that emanated from the Caribbean and Latin America. The scholars such as Walter Rodney from Guyana, Franz Fanon from the Caribbean Island of Martinique as well as Dependency Theorists such as Andre Gunder Frank had a profound influence on the intellectual traditions of scholars and policy makers in the developing world. And this is a rich heritage that your regions bequeathed the world.

It is in this context that the revival of the Unisa Centre for Latin American Studies finds resonance but being mindful of the hard work ahead and consultations that must suggest how this centre will find relevance to the challenges and opportunities of the 21st Century.

I would like to close my welcoming remarks with the lyrics of Bob Marley's song ***"One Love/People Get Ready" which reads "One Love, One Heart, Let's get together and feel alright."***

This is a call for a global world and humanity to strive for social justice through these initiatives.

I wish consultations and future engagements well with a strong conviction that this is the beginning of a great journey of partnership.

I thank you

Gracias

Obrigado

Dankjewel