



The Office Of The Principal and Vice - Chancellor

PROF MANDLA MAKHANYA, PRINCIPAL AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA

WELCOME: UNISA PROGRAMME ON HEAIDS

2016 INSTITUTIONAL VISIT

OR TAMBO BUILDING

ROOM 14-10, MUCKLENEUK CAMPUS

13 April 2016

- Madame facilitator, Ms V Malefo, Health and Wellness Manager
– HIV/AIDS Section, Unisa
- Dr Ramneek Ahluwalia, HEAIDS Director
- Dr PS Zulu , Executive Director, HR
- HEAIDS Curriculum Development project Leader (CHS)
- Dr LB Ramuedzisi, Director, Employee Relations and Wellness
- Unisa staff and students

- Ladies and gentlemen

A very warm welcome to you all as we once again reiterate this University's support for the HEAIDS programme, now called the Higher Education and Training HIV/AIDS programme, which is currently in its third phase.

If there is one thing which we in Southern Africa have learnt, it is that we simply cannot afford to become complacent when it comes to HIV/AIDS, TB and STI's: not only in our country but also, and more especially, in our universities with their large student populations. We have learnt over time, and at painful cost, that we need to be - vigilant and pragmatic about managing this pandemic, and that failure to do so soon will see us losing the very precious gains that we have made.

You see, when it comes to managing HIV/AIDS/TB/STIs, universities and TVET colleges have a unique and vital role to play. As the PSET sector, we are I believe, morally obliged to be engaged with the pandemic, particularly given that we are able to reach almost two million students across the almost 400 campuses which we comprise – young men and women who represent the leadership and future of our country.

It is equally important to remember ladies and gentlemen that this is not a finite number of young people. Every year new students enrol

and we have to begin the process of education and support from scratch. On the positive side it is important to appreciate that those who graduate from our institutions, do not only do so armed with skills and qualifications, but also with knowledge about their sexual health that could quite literally be life-saving and which they will be able to practice and share with partners, friends, family and even their own children. The same applies to the large number of staff employed in our various tertiary institutions, which I am quite certain, runs into many thousands.

Higher education plays a very significant role in the economic life of this nation, and contributes materially to socio-economic development and national progress. Academic citizenship signals our commitment and that of our institutions, to the communities that we serve. This is done through teaching and learning, research and innovation and social engagement in the lives of, and in partnership with our communities. We are in fact, fundamentally committed to social development, and to being relevant and responsive to the condition of our societies and our people. HIV/AIDS/TB/STI's threaten both the foundations of what we seek to achieve as universities, and the healthy society that we all desire to develop. Therefore, as universities and TVET colleges and as a responsible citizenry we are called to commit to this programme, to the best of our ability.

Since the inception of this project ladies and gentlemen, success has been hampered, not by a lack of will or energy on the part of its project champions, but because of financial constraints. At a time when there are so many competing demands on our financial coffers, especially in the PSET sector, it is gratifying to have learnt of the almost 25 million rand that has been made available from the National Skills Fund, through the Minister of Higher Education and Training, to enable academic staff at public universities and TVET Colleges across disciplines and faculties, to integrate HIV and AIDS issues into curricula. This is long overdue and it builds on the EU funded research to better understand whether and how the core function of teaching and learning may be harnessed to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS. Unisa will certainly endeavour to play its role in this vital project.

It is gratifying in fact, to notice the numerous strategic partnerships that have been forged by HEAIDS, which are being harnessed and leveraged in pursuit of the HEAIDS agenda. It is the way to go and interestingly enough it is a model of engagement and collaboration which Unisa is employing as well, as we too seek to maximise all of the capacity at our disposal, to ensure a quality education experience for our students.

Recent events at our institutions have demonstrated just how easily socio-economic events and demands can overshadow “business-as-usual” at our institutions, relegating to lower levels on the “to-do” lists, those projects and initiatives that do not represent an immediate threat, irrespective of how important they may be. How easy under such circumstance it would be, for us to lose sight of the very valuable work that is being done by HEAIDS, and by Unisa, as encompassed in Phase 3 of the HEAIDS project.

This visit is therefore relevant and well timed. As a university we have implemented austerity measures to ensure our sustainability at a time of serious and significant demands on our resources, in the wake of the “fees-must-fall” and “insourcing” demands and programmes. In this context your resource mobilisation model is particularly apposite.

I therefore wish you well as you work with my Unisa colleagues on a sustainable model towards the strengthening of the HEAIDS programme in our institution and further afield; including its funding, strategy, monitoring and evaluation, and we look forward to continuing the sound relationship that we have forged with HEAIDS since its inception in 2000/2001.

I thank you.