



Office of the Principal and Vice Chancellor

UNISA CHANCELLOR THABO MBEKI CELEBRATES HIS 80TH BIRTHDAY

Saturday June 18th, 2022

Salutations...

Good evening to everyone!

Many historians, scholars, socio-political analysts and may I add – friend and foe alike – all agree on one thing: President Thabo Mbeki is an extra-ordinary human-being.

A visionary leader whose much revered African Renaissance philosophy breathed enormous energy into the development and much needed prosperity of Africa – from Cape to Cairo, Morocco to Madagascar.

It is remarkably significant; therefore, that Nelson Mandela's successor as the first president of the new South Africa became none other than Thabo Mbeki, a dyed-in-the-wool anti-apartheid activist who is today our highly-esteemed Chancellor here at UNISA.

We are gathered here today to give thanks and praise to the omnipotent, the creator of all things great and small – the Almighty – for the precious and wonderful gift to life that is Thabo Mbeki whom we join as he celebrates his 80th birthday, a milestone of note by any account.

Through his foresight, President Mbeki was at the forefront of transforming the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) into the present-day, globally respected African Union. In his heart, lies the dream of the rebirth of a continent often referred to as a “sleeping giant”.

Under Mbeki’s continental leadership, the international community was caused to note Mbeki’s African Renaissance as a concept that “the African people shall overcome the current challenges confronting the continent and achieve cultural, scientific, and economic renewal”.

This was, and still is, one of the most earth-shaking visions to come out of the 21st century. This is more so in the light of Africa’s perennial troubles that are hard to overcome, which includes coups, corruption, poverty and want.

Mbeki’s foresight at the helm of the governing African National Congress for two terms, also saw the country experience steady economic growth, as well as political stability within and also outside of the governing party.

Today we celebrate a towering figure in politics, academia and life in general. Mbeki’s brand has undoubtedly impacted

brand Unisa in ways unimaginable. Suffice to say it remains one of the university's greatest gains to enlist the services of the one and only Thabo Mbeki as our Chancellor.

Unisa is consciously described as “an African university shaping futures in the service of humanity”. The fundamental ethos of Ubuntu/Botho lies at the centre of the execution of the academic project. Our university's objective to provide learning and teaching opportunities throughout the continent is in great resonance with former President Mbeki's African Renaissance.

This outstanding African son and intellectual giant serves as a global attraction to Unisa through, among others, the Thabo Mbeki African Leadership Institute that churns out properly-trained men and women for public and international affairs.

The fact that our Chancellor is still involved in a range of conflict resolution works, as well as post-conflict reconstruction equally places Unisa at the centre of the public good that's required for our continent's new dawn.

Unisa's partnership with the Thabo Mbeki Foundation is one of the university's flagship strategic relationships and has greatly assisted in re-positioning Unisa across Africa and globally.

We celebrate the life and times of a remarkable leader – son of the soil – whose legacy we at Unisa are proud to secure and share in the knowledge that the African Renaissance can

be achieved through learning and teaching, and drinking from the well that is the Thabo Mbeki Presidential Library strategically located at Unisa's main campus.

There is a book titled "80 things to do when you turn 80" by Mark Evan Chimsky. It is a lively and inspiring collection of eighty essays by illustrious achievers who share their ideas on how to live well in your eighties.

The book, which is available online, will also give you guidance on how to keep your mental skills sharp as you age as gracefully as you do.

On behalf of Unisa, I hereby wish you – our beloved Chancellor – and global citizen and elder – a blessed happy 80th birthday and wish you good health and much love.

I thank you.