



## Initiating a Regional Project on

### **“Ecological Connectivity and Oceanography in the Indian Ocean”: Welcome by Professor Sibongile Muthwa,**

*Vice-Chancellor, Nelson Mandela University*

09:00, 27 September 2021

The Premier of the Eastern Cape, **the Honourable Oscar Mabuyane**

The Ambassador of the French Embassy in South Africa, His Excellency **Mr Aurélien Lechevallier**

The Deputy Director-General of the Department of Science and Innovation, **Mr Daan du Toit**

The Research Team involved in this excellent initiative

Eminent representatives of the different research bodies in South Africa, the Comoros, France, Madagascar, Mozambique and the Seychelles.

Programme Directors:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research, Innovation and Internationalisation, **Dr Thandi Mgwebi,**

The Attaché for Science and Technology at the French Embassy, **Dr Moncef Meddeb,**

Nelson Mandela University Management and staff

**Bonjour, Bom dia (M is smooth silent), Berza (R is smooth silent),** good morning, Molweni

On behalf of Nelson Mandela University, it is my pleasure to welcome you to this gathering jointly organised by Mandela University and the French Embassy in South Africa.

How I wish I was present to meet and welcome you in person, even to bump elbows under the continued threat of the Covid-19 pandemic. I humbly apologise for not being able to be at the venue physically.

Please allow me to thank the Premier of the Eastern Cape, the Honourable Mr Mabuyane, for his unwavering support for the work of our University, and for always finding time in his busy schedule to honour our invitations as he has done here today. *Siyabulela kakhulu Nkukumbuso!*

Ambassador Lechevallier, **accueillir à nouveau!!**

By now, you need no introduction, our University has become a second home to you. Your staunch support for Nelson Mandela University, your unwavering commitment to readily contribute to the development of the University's academic project has moved us from being partners to almost being family. **Merci beaucoup!!**

The presence of our Honourable Premier today is a reflection of the strong support that Nelson Mandela University enjoys from all spheres of government. It reflects the depth of the South African government's commitment to strengthen and encourage the collaborative efforts of universities, the scientific community, and our international partners. It demonstrates an embracing of the Quadruple Helix approach to the innovation system, which challenges all of us to ensure that the work that we do, and the scientific discoveries that we unearth directly speak to the needs of our people.

The French government has long been a firm supporter of our University's scientific and innovation journey. Our partnership has grown from strength to strength, the mutual respect and friendship that we have built over the years, has led to layers of cooperation, we did not imagine possible. I am proud to stand before you today to affirm how this initiative is a direct consequence of these enduring relations.

Of course, such support is underpinned by a recognition of France as a strategic partner and friend of South Africa. Not only does this cooperation and friendship improve our capacity to

respond to our nation's development imperatives, but it also enables us to connect with our neighbours to improve the collective capacity of African countries to deliver solutions to Africa's problems, and to work together and collectively contribute to addressing a myriad of global ills.

I must truly congratulate the work of our Institute for Coastal and Marine Research for the outstanding work in positioning the Ocean Sciences as a strategic niche of our University. This work is also making an important contribution in our intention to becoming a hub of sustainability science. I am immensely proud of our researchers and as they will also attest, as a Vice-Chancellor I, along with key governance structures of the University, stand in full support of their work.

I read the concept behind this initiative with great interest. It presents us with an incredible opportunity to work with partners in the rest of our Africa continent. To link Mozambique, Madagascar, the Seychelles, the Comoros, South Africa and France, provides a useful platform for expanded collaboration. This also underscores the fact that we need to work together if we are to triumph against commanding global challenges.

I read about the idea of developing **biologging** technology and state-of-the-art **modelling** tools to track marine species, their movement patterns, and interaction with their environment across borders, and I am fascinated. I thank you DVC Mgwebi, for championing this endeavour. I see in this proposed research an intersection of your full portfolio of Research, Innovation and Internationalisation. I must congratulate you and your staff, especially our head of International Education Department, Dr Beata Mtyingizana for elegant manner in helping us to host this function.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Deputy Director-General of the Department of Science and Innovation, Mr Daan du toit, and his team for always being ready to support us and our scientist.

I hope everyone in attendance will find the time at Nelson Mandela University intellectually enriching, and your time in our wonderful city of Gqeberha enjoyable. The University is located in a nature reserve and you will not escape the beauty of mother nature and breath-taking

landscapes. Those of you attending virtually and who have not been to our city and University, I extend an invitation to come and visit us.

As Nelson Mandela University we pride ourselves in being a university in the service of society, contributing to resolve within our mandate the pressing challenges of our time. The initiative we are launching here today will go a long way to helping us do this.

I thank you.