

NELSON MANDELA

UNIVERSITY

**Public Diplomacy Lecture
A collaboration with DIRCO
Opening and Welcome**

**Professor Sibongile Muthwa Vice-Chancellor
11:00 -13:00 12 May 2021**

HYBRID: North Campus Conference Centre and On-line

Deputy Minister Botes

Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners

Colleagues in the Department of International Relations and Co-operation

Deputy Vice-Chancellors

Deans of Faculties and the Dean of Students

Professors, academics and university colleagues

Representatives of Student Formations

Students, particularly those pursuing programmes in the Humanities

Discussants, Dr Sithembile Mbethe, and Dr Philani Mthembu,

Programme participants

I welcome you all warmly to this lecture today. Nelson Mandela University is proud to be partnering with the Department of International Relations and Co-operation to co-host this symposium reflecting on the role South Africa is playing in fostering multilateralism in Africa and the rest of the world. If there is one lesson that has emerged from the suffering and loss the brought about by Corona Virus pandemic, it must surely be that our fate as the country and Continent is intimately and intricately bound with that of every other nation across the globe. **This underscores and re-centres the criticality of mechanisms and platforms that enable and foster engagement between countries, continents and regions.** In this regard we need to fashion a global dialogue to seek integrated solutions to the complex socio-economic and political challenges that confront us as one world.

As Nelson Mandela University, we anchor our approach to internationalization on the tireless work of our namesake, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, and all of leaders of that selfless generation - who stood out as a principled global leaders internationalists, of consciene.

And so we regard today's symposium as an ideal opportunity to take forward that work, and explore multilateralism and South Africa's role on the United Nations Security Council and our country's leadership role and participation in the of the African Union.

I trust that our engagements, discussions and debates today will be reflective and critical, and will seek ways to reveal, to ourselves primarily, our potential as a catalyzing and enabling nation and active partner in ensuring continental advancement, to continue to be a global voice for cohesive coexistence, as anticipated by post-liberation founders of our free country. But I also hope this engagement will re-assert our reputation as a nation that defied prediction of what an African country could achieve to inspire hope and renewal of its long-oppressed people. Indeed, I also believe, we will use this opportunity to be self-critical.

It is particularly important that there are students and student formations participating today. To those students who are pursuing studies in Humanities through which you engage with political discourse and learn the intricacies and craft of diplomacy and multilateralism - we trust that, when all is said and done, you will deploy these skills as public officials in service of the country and the continent. And surely some of you will proudly represent the country through ambassadorial and consular deployments. Your achievements as students make a significant contribution to our quest to revitalize the Humanities, underlining the importance of related study fields towards integrated global growth and development and the concomitant reduction of poverty and marginalization.

At Mandela, we believe that every student needs exposure to an international perspective. As a result, our Internationalisation Strategy aims to promote comprehensive internationalisation which endeavours to integrate Nelson Mandela University within a global knowledge economy.

This, in turn, we believe will enhance our global positioning, pedagogical and scholarly relevance and contribute to the development of graduates who are ready to engage with the rest of the world and the demands of the global labour market.

To be sure, the strategic thrust of the university's internationalisation efforts places the African continent at the centre. We have prioritised expanding our African footprint. Central to our guiding framework is to seek and strengthen association within those countries that constituted Nelson Mandela's 1962 travel throughout the African continent to seek support and mobilize resources for the liberation struggle of South Africa.

It further includes those countries Madiba visited upon his release from prison in 1990, as well as those which we have continued to work with, and with whom we have established strong relations with as a country, through his initial participation in their peace-building processes.

Our engagements with partner institutions in these countries will seek to identify modalities of working together to contribute to the socio-economic development needs of the continent through the pursuit of scholarly and research collaborations. We aim to work together with partners and stakeholders on initiatives that will inform our contribution towards the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and objectives of the African Union's Agenda 2063.

The recent release of the Times Higher Education [THE] Impact Rankings indicates that Nelson Mandela University is emerging as a leader in Sustainability Sciences in South Africa and indeed, Africa. **This achievement comes at a pivotal point in the university's history and**

provides the opportunity to capitalize on this strength by launching Nelson Mandela University into the global arena of Sustainability Sciences.

Later this year we will launch the Raymond Mhlaba Centre. This will be the hub for Public Leadership, Management and Development work at the University. Through the scholarship, capacity building, research and policy work that the Centre will undertake, we believe that the University can make a noteworthy contribution to strengthen the skills and competencies that are needed to underpin and inform the country's multilateral endeavours.

All this attests to our ambition of revitalisation of the humanities.

In so doing, the country will continue to make a valuable contribution to global platforms such as the United Nations and the African Union. (As my colleagues can realise, I have had to exercise a lot of restraint in not delving into some of the excellent work that our Faculties and entities are engaged in, in realization of what we prefer to refer to as Africa-purposed and globally relevant scholarship, that will ensure that this University stays true to its promise of an anchored and placed university that is in service to society)

I look forward to a robust engagement in the course of our deliberations this morning.

I thank you.