

**WELCOME ADDRESS BY GAUTENG PREMIER DAVID
MAKHURA, ON THE OCCASION OF THE INAUGURAL
AFRICA UNIVERSITIES SUMMIT. UNIVERSITY OF
JOHANNESBURG**

30 JULY 2015

His Excellency, the former President of the Republic of South Africa,
Dr Thabo Mbeki;

The Vice Chancellor and Principal of the University of Johannesburg,
Professor Ihron Rensburg and Deputy Vice Chancellors;

Vice Chancellors and Principals of other African Universities;

The Editor of Times Higher Education, Mr John Grill;

Distinguished Academics from African universities;

Thought Leaders and Opinion Makers;

Business Leaders;

Representatives of Governments;

Fellow Africans:

It is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the Inaugural Africa
Universities Summit, hosted by our own University of Johannesburg
in our Province and City.

This Summit brings under one roof some of Africa's foremost thought
leaders, scholars, policy makers and business leaders.

Undoubtedly, you are united by the common commitment to find new and innovative ways of placing the African university at the centre of the project of Africa's quest for renewal, regeneration and renaissance.

Addressing the United Nations University in October 2001 in Japan, former President Thabo Mbeki has the following to say about Africa's place in the evolution of the Earth and Humanity:

“One will make bold to say that those of us interested in the history of the evolution of the Earth, have to look at the history of Africa. If we wish to examine the history and the genesis of life, that evidence points to the history of Africa.

And as it is now well established, if we want to look closely into the history of the beginnings and evolution of humanity, that history is also in Africa.

Of course, all these have been corroborated by the rich and unique African fossil evidence. Indeed, nowhere on Earth is there a concentration of fossil records that reveal so much about the Earth, the evolution of life and of humanity, than those found on the vast expanse of the African landscape, especially in the south and east of the Continent.”

Ladies and gentlemen of letters, you gather here as scholars and universities who occupy a special pride of place in Africa's quest for self-definition, self-knowledge and self-propagation.

Over the next two days, we are confident that this Summit will spend time reflecting on and sharing ideas on the role and place of Africa's Universities in defining the African Agenda.

Fellow Africans, this Summit is taking place at the time when our continent continues to confound its critics, cynics and pessimists as a new frontier for economic growth and source of hope for many economies that are floundering.

Despite concerns as a result of declining commodity prices and instability in certain parts of our continent, Africa's prospects remain positive. In particular, we are encouraged that so far African economies have been relatively resilient to the sharp fall in international commodity prices.

The African Development Bank estimates that real GDP growth in Africa will average 4 per cent in 2015, reaching 5 per cent in 2016. To us this points to the resilience of the African economy in the face of numerous challenges. Of course, GDP growth should not be the only focus of development.

In June this year, our country and our province had the honour to host the AU Summit which adopted Agenda 2063. African universities and scholars have to locate themselves at the centre of the Africa Rising narrative and critically engage with all developments that impact on Africa and humanity. As former President Mbeki has pointed out, Africa has been at the centre of the study of the history and evolution of the Earth and Humanity.

We look up to this Summit to help us answer some critical development questions facing our continent. What kind of investment is needed to ensure that our higher education institutions play a leading role in the on-going efforts for transformation, modernization and industrialization of our continent? What kind of graduates do we need to produce to response to Africa's socio-economic challenges and enormous opportunities? What kind of Pan-African research and scholarship is needed to support Agenda 2063? What kind of activists and political leaders are required to move Africa forward and restore its standing and stature as an equal among other regions of the world?

This Summit must also help our universities establish strategic alliances with industry, government and civil society in order to develop the human capacity and capabilities needed to achieve a new and prosperous future for our continent.

Programme Director, as part of consolidating Gauteng's position as one of Africa's leading economies and in pursuit of our programme to radically Transform, Modernize and Re-industrialize our province, we have strengthened our focus on intra-Africa trade.

We have also prioritized the establishment of stronger partnerships with institutions of higher learning and research institutes.

As we do this work, we move from the understanding that the potential for innovation and economic development in a knowledge society lies in a more prominent role for institutions of higher learning as well as combining elements from these institutions, industry and government to generate new institutional and social forms of production, transfer and application of knowledge.

In line with this understanding, we have signed and will continue to sign Memoranda of Understanding with our institutions of higher learning to ensure there is a strong research agenda that supports our programme for radical Transformation, Modernisation and Reindustrialisation.

As we welcome you in Gauteng province of South Africa, I would like to remind you that we host the Cradle of Humankind.

I hope you will take time, in the midst of your busy schedule, to visit the historical site, Maropeng, the World Heritage site that represents the beginnings and evolution of humanity to which former President Thabo Mbeki referred.

A big part of the vast archeological evidence and wealth of research cited in President Mbeki speech to the United Nations University is found here in Gauteng.

Like Timbuktu manuscripts and the Egyptian pyramids, these constitute our collective heritage as Africans. We must protect these vast African heritage from plunder, looting and wanton destruction.

I wish to congratulate the University of Johannesburg for hosting this inaugural Africa Universities Summit.

We wish you a successful Summit.

Thank you. Asante Santa. Siyabonga. Rea leboga.