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**Installation of Justice Edwin Cameron as the
15th Chancellor of Stellenbosch University**

Kruiskerk, Stellenbosch, 18 May 2022, 17:00

**Tribute and investiture by
SU Rector and Vice-Chancellor Prof Wim de Villiers**

Respected members of the Stellenbosch University Council, Honourable representatives from the Department of Higher Education and Training, learned Professors and academics of our institution and other universities present here today, members of the university community, and all our valued guests:

Thank you for attending this celebration and installation of Justice Edwin Cameron as Chancellor of Stellenbosch University. It is an inauguration that has been delayed as a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic that followed shortly after he became Chancellor.

In accordance with the provisions of our Statute, an electoral college consisting of the members of Council, the members of the Executive Committee of Senate, and the President and Vice-President of the Convocation elected the honourable Justice Edwin Cameron as the 15th Chancellor of Stellenbosch University in September 2019, and he assumed office on in January 2020.

I don't want to expand too much on his CV. We are all aware of the peaks of his professional life: from his days as a young human rights lawyer to the pinnacle of his career as a judge in the Constitutional Court of South Africa. A significant part of his legal career was dedicated to using the law, apartheid's oppressive instrument, to work against apartheid. As he articulated it on occasion: "Properly employed, the law under apartheid could be used to repair, not to break down or to damage."

With this approach to law and the legal profession he became an important activist for people living with HIV and Aids, and promoting social justice over a wide front, including fighting for the rights of the LGBTQ communities.

As I have said earlier, this inauguration has been delayed by two years, but Justice Cameron has been exemplary in his role as Chancellor during this time. I am just delighted that we're now finally getting the opportunity to do this investiture in person. A virtual ceremony would have lacked the gravitas an occasion like this requires. And he is someone who embodies "gravitas".

Long before he joined Stellenbosch University in an official capacity as Chancellor, Justice Cameron has proved himself to be not just an extraordinary South African leader, but above all, a relentless proponent of the protection and promotion of human dignity for all, regardless of colour, race or creed.

The current rhetoric and discourse in politics all over the world, often lacks the two elements of *dignitas* and *gravitas*. Stellenbosch University, is truly blessed to have a Chancellor that is the embodiment of both these qualities.

During the past two years the Stellenbosch University community has gotten to know Justice Cameron as an inspiring figure, whose imposing stature – physically and

intellectually – commands respect, not only because of his achievements, but because of his demeanour.

I think it's worth reiterating what we are trying to achieve at Stellenbosch University. Our vision is to be Africa's leading research-intensive university, globally recognised as excellent, inclusive and innovative, where we advance knowledge in service of society.

And our values: Excellence, Compassion, Equity, Respect, Accountability. It's a value system that aims to guide people in our community – our students, staff, and anyone else involved with the university – to guide their actions.

And as the ceremonial head of the University Justice Cameron has beyond any doubt lived up to all these values in ways that further inspire the pursuit of excellence in our academic project, but more importantly, to utilise this national asset to provide access to equal opportunities for all who regard Stellenbosch University as their institution of choice for further and advance studies.

Justice Cameron shares our vision of a university that provides all our students with a transformative teaching and learning experience, that can best be described as inclusive excellence. This is the hallmark of everything we do, undergirded and guided by our strong institutional values.

It is hence with a deep sense of pain that his investiture is celebrated in a climate that reminds one of the repugnant oppressive practices of a bygone era. As you no doubt know, there has been a most regrettable incident in one of our residences the past weekend. Rest assured that we have taken the appropriate action within the stipulations of our disciplinary code to deal with this matter decisively.

Part of Justice Cameron's life's work has been ensuring that the dignity of all people must remain intact. And we'd do well to use his life's work as an example for how we want Stellenbosch University to look.

Colleagues, friends: I've been travelling internationally for the past few weeks, strengthening our international partnerships, expanding our networks and meeting with alumni. And every time I'm struck by how Maties alumni are shaping their communities, whether it's in rural South Africa or some of the biggest cities in the world.

Our university is thus not only an asset to our country. Our impact and reach stretch far beyond our borders and across continents. And in Justice Cameron we have an alumnus and a Chancellor who recognises our unique position on the African continent. And one who is willing to go the extra mile to help us achieve our vision.

With his guidance and assistance, we will keep transforming, keep evolving, and keep moving forward together.

Honorable Justice Edwin Cameron, it is now my pleasure to confer on you the powers and status associated with the Office of the Chancellor of Stellenbosch University.

To signify your installation and acceptance of your duties, I will now invest on you the Chancellor's robe.