

Signing of a Letter of Understanding between  
the United Nations Populations Fund & Stellenbosch University (SU),  
Boardroom, Admin B, SU, Stellenbosch, 8 July 2012

**Remarks by Prof H Russel Botman,  
Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University**

Mr Makinwa, Prof Du Toit, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, what a significant moment this is – for the University (SU), for the United Nations Population Fund, but most importantly, for every woman, man and child who call Africa their home.

I say this because the ultimate beneficiaries of today's agreement are the 1 billion people of our great continent. The agreement puts some of the best expertise at the disposal of one of the most important development agencies. And it does so to boost one of the most ambitious global programmes ever – the Millennium Development Goals.

The MDGs were adopted by world leaders at the turn of the century with the twin aims of reducing poverty and promoting development. Two-and-a-half years away from the target date of 2015, some regions doing better than others.

In Africa – particularly Sub-Saharan Africa – there is good progress in some areas, but many countries are unfortunately lagging on some of the indicators. Clearly we need to redouble our efforts, and that's where this agreement comes in.

The United Nations Population Fund – through its Regional Programme for Africa – works in 46 countries on our continent. It lends support in key areas. It is therefore well-placed to promote the MDGs on our continent, particularly those goals relating to maternal & child health, gender equality, as well as the fight against HIV/AIDS.

And Stellenbosch University is well-placed to be a partner in this endeavour. We have been recognised as one of the top universities in the world, and as Africa's research leader.

But there is another reason why Stellenbosch is well-suited to this task, and that is our focus on the MDGs through our HOPE Project. We follow a science-for-society approach at the University. We are convinced that universities should not be ivory towers, but engaged institutions. They should be relevant to the needs of society.

That is why the theme of hope serves as a guiding notion at Stellenbosch. We took the eight MDGs and distilled five themes from them, namely to:

1. Eradicate poverty and related condition;
2. Contribute to human dignity & health;
3. Consolidate democracy & human rights;
4. Promote peace & security; and

5. Balance a sustainable environment with a competitive industry.

These themes are pursued in each of the university's core functions of learning and teaching, research and community interaction. And they find practical expression in various initiatives developed by our staff and students with a view to making a tangible difference in society.

One of our strongest initiatives is the Africa Centre for HIV and AIDS Management, the largest programme of its kind in the world. Since it was established in 2003, it has produced more than 3 000 graduates from 48 countries, people who obtained either a postgraduate diploma or a master's degree.

Clearly, the Africa Centre has a proud track record and proven expertise, which is why they have been chosen for this partnership. The University is most grateful for this vote of confidence. And we shall do our utmost to live up to expectations.

Through the years, Stellenbosch has built up a reputation as a partner that can be trusted with big responsibilities. Approximately 31% of our budget is funded from third-stream income – in other words, neither state subsidy, nor student fees, but research contracts, grants and donations, plus sales of services and products.

Our donors – domestic and international – all set stringent accounting and reporting standards, which we expect all our faculties and departments and centres to adhere to. Solid accounting practices through the years have built confidence in our financial management and corporate governance practices, and we intend maintaining this record.

Mr Makinwa, I want to thank the United Nations Population Fund for the confidence shown in Stellenbosch University and in our Africa Centre for HIV and AIDS Management.

The Africa Centre will act as the United Nations Population Fund's partner in sourcing the best service providers to do important development work in 46 countries on our continent.

This kind of collaboration is the way to go. It is through knowledge partnerships, through coalitions for development, that we will change the world.

Congratulations to those involved in putting together the agreement that we will be signing today. And to the United Nations Population Fund and the Africa Centre – I wish you strength and wisdom for the task ahead.

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