Collaboration Across Continents in the Field of Research and Higher Education: A Day of Dialogue
Presented by the European Foundation Centre, in association with Stellenbosch University and the VolkswagenStiftung
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Remarks on Higher Education in Africa by Prof Russel Botman, Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Stellenbosch University, and a Vice-President of the Association of African Universities

- Good morning everyone, and thanks for joining us.
- Great to see all of you here. Allow me to single out a few guests:
  - Margaret Mulligan and Gerry Salole of the European Foundation Centre, the organisers of this dialogue
  - Dr Wilhelm Krull, Secretary-General of the VolkswagenStiftung, our co-hosts this morning
  - Prof Ahmed Bawa of Durban University of Technology, also here today in his capacity as Chairperson of HESA
  - Colleagues from the Universities of Antananarivo, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Venda and Fort Hare
  - Daniel Tarschys of the Stiftelsen Riksbankens Jubileumfonds
  - Colleagues from the Vaal, Durban and Tshwane Universities of Technology
  - Annie Hillar of Mama Cash
  - Colleagues from Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, Cape Peninsula and Mangosuthu Universities of Technology
  - Prof Omotade Akin Aina of the Carnegie Corporation of New York
  - Colleagues from the Universities of KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Free State
  - John Butler-Adam of the Ford Foundation
  - Colleagues from Stellenbosch University
  - Friends, ladies and gentlemen ...
- ... a warm welcome to Stellenbosch.
- What a great day this promises to be – an occasion not just to swop business cards ...
- ... but to exchange ideas on how we can take hands across continents and work together to promote research and higher education in general
- Coming, as it does, a day after African University Day, it is appropriate that we consider for a moment the challenges facing higher education on our continent
- One problem we have in Africa is our low rate of higher education participation – on average just 6% of the eligible age group (some parts higher)
- Another problem: Africa’s research output is only 0,7% of the global total
- We are not producing enough African solutions to African challenges
- Part of the reason is that Africa’s research output is not visible to the world
We need to do more to promote academic publishing in Africa, including through open access.

We also see that African researchers publish in Europe, the United States and elsewhere, which means their work is not reflected as African output.

- Now, there have been many good collaborations between Africa and institutions in the global North, to great benefit of the people of Africa.
- But if there has been one problem, it is that African institutions have generally been the secondary partners.
- The time has come for Africa to be an equal partner, and even to take the lead – and why shouldn’t it?
- The time has also come for INTRA African collaboration in higher education.
- Together these two things – (1) Africa taking the lead, or at least being an equal partner in North/South collaborations; and (2) African institutions building strong networks IN Africa – will empower us to address Africa’s challenges.

There are many challenges:

- Yes, the continent is registering good economic growth
- And yes, democracy is expanding
- But we still have a huge poverty and inequality problem
- And human rights and civil liberties still have to be consolidated

- Now, two of the presentations today will be expanding on the kind of research and academic collaboration that we need in Africa.
- The first is PANGeA, the Partnership for Africa’s Next Generation of Academics.
  - It is a network between Stellenbosch and the universities of Botswana, Dar es Salaam, Makerere, Malawi and Nairobi.
  - The MOU was signed right here almost exactly a year ago.
  - Stellenbosch showed its commitment by investing R350 million in its HOPE Project, and from it, PANGeA is partly being funded.
  - Other partners also on board include the VolkswagenStiftung.
  - On the strength of us putting our money where our mouths are, others are also coming on board.

  - Which brings me to the second example that will be discussed later today, the Periperi U partnership.

- This is an example of a foreign donor funding an intra-African network between 10 African universities.
  - You might have seen on Morning Live and in Business Day this morning, we had a function here last night where USAID announced a grant of nearly $5 million over 4 years to the partnership.
  - Stellenbosch is part of this partnership, and the secretariat is based here.

- Now, Periperi U deals with disaster management, and whenever you have a disaster, there is a need for potable water.
• We are very excited about an invention that has come out of the Stellenbosch University Water Institute – the “teabag” water filter
• It uses electrospun nano-fibres, biocides and activated carbon granules to filter and clean polluted water
• In 2010, it was hailed a “World-Changing Idea” by Scientific American magazine
• It has just been licensed to the private sector, and is currently in final development
• Nelson Mandela once said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”
• The best way for us to realise this vision in Africa, is to invest in African capacity building
• This resonates well with Stellenbosch University’s approach to use its knowledge and expertise to be an agent of change.
• We call it our HOPE Project, and it entails – in a nutshell – using “science for society”.
• This approach has become the driver of Stellenbosch University’s pedagogical and demographic transformation
• The interesting thing is that a focus on relevance has internal benefits as well – by strengthening our research, our learning and teaching, and our community interaction.
• We consciously view the world around us as our first and living laboratory.
• In this way, the whole academic enterprise is elevated – as we have seen recently with the inclusion of Stellenbosch University in two international lists of the top universities globally:
  • the QS World University Rankings; and
  • the Times Higher Education World University Rankings.
• We need to replicate this all over Africa – not chasing rankings as such, but investing in indigenous knowledge and grow home-grown expertise
• A strong and healthy Africa is in the world’s interest
• Let us work together to revitalise higher education and research in Africa
• I trust you will have fruitful discussions today
• Thank you to our partners who have made this dialogue possible
• Welcome, again, ladies and gentlemen, and enjoy the rest of the day.