

**Speech by Prof H Russel Botman,
Rector and Vice-Chancellor, Stellenbosch University,
at the India evening
Thursday 28 August 2008 at the Wallenberg Centre,
Stellenbosch.**

His Excellency Mr Rajiv Kumar. Bhatia, High Commissioner of India to South Africa, and Mrs. Bhatia; Mrs. Ruchira Kamboj, Minister and Head of Office, High Commission of India in Cape Town & Mr. Diwakar Kamboj; Mr. Mewa Ramgobin, Member of Parliament, and Mrs. Mariam Ramgobin; Mr. Raman Dhawan and partners representing Tata South Africa; respected members of the Stellenbosch University management, colleagues, ladies and gentlemen

It is indeed an honour to welcome you tonight to a celebration of Indian flair on African soil as a manifestation of the envisaged confluence of two strong streams into a river that will bring hope and prosperity as far as its waters flow. We see this event as a significant step on the way to formalizing our strategic

partnerships with one of the giants of the southern hemisphere in a way that will give a new thrust and impetus to our University's international relations.

Stellenbosch University is one of the leading institutions of higher education not only in this country but on the African continent as a whole. We have been described, and commended, as a well managed and research driven university with strategic partners of note, nationally and internationally. Traditionally, our focus has been on fostering partnerships and allegiance with institutions in the northern hemisphere – across Europe, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. These bonds are precious and we will maintain and nurture it with the care it deserves.

But for many years we have realised that we need to expand our international relations and partnerships with countries that have grappled with issues and have made great strides in areas of research and technological advances that are closer to home, in a manner of speaking: areas such as poverty alleviation, the eradication of illiteracy, promoting social and economic justice, innovative health care to the vast majority of the population; and technological solutions and advances in the areas of telecommunications and engineering in its broadest sense.

At Stellenbosch University we have purposefully decided to put science behind some of the most pressing needs of our country and the African continent at large. We have embarked on a program of research and knowledge pioneering that we popularly refer to as “science for society”. In this regard our research programs are honed on alleviating pandemic poverty, the promotion of food security, the promotion of democracy, ensuring sustainable utilization and development of the environment.

These broad trans-disciplinary research areas will lay the foundation for our pedagogy of hope that will be the future hallmark of this university. Incidentally, these crucial themes are strong features of the Millennium Development goals of the United Nations and in this regard Stellenbosch University is positioning itself at the heart of the international development agenda with a glocal focus – meaning a focus on global issues and the needs of our region, our country and the continent of Africa, as I have already pointed out.

To us, fostering of partnerships with the Indian government, and institutions of higher education and research institutes in India, are crucial elements in enhancing our ability to put science to work in a meaningful way to deliver on our promise of hope for a better life for all our people.

We see tonight also as a building block in our further collaborative efforts flowing from the 2005 agreement between the governments of India, Brazil and South Africa to establish a unique framework for trilateral co-ordination on international issues and co-operation in several areas, including Science and Technology.

In terms of this collaborative agreement the three countries agreed to develop Science and Technology cooperation in six specified fields – biotechnology, HIV/Aids, malaria, nanotechnology, oceanography, and tuberculosis (TB). Each country would take the lead in two of these areas. South Africa leads in biotechnology and TB, India in HIV/Aids and nanotechnology, and Brazil in malaria and oceanography.

South Africa, India and Brazil are currently jointly funding seven trilateral science and technology R&D projects, in the areas of HIV/Aids, nanotechnology, and oceanography. The seven projects started in 2007 and will run for three years, and are being financed by an IBSA fund, contributed to equally by the three member countries.

The particular collaborative efforts and envisaged partnerships of Stellenbosch University with India holds great promise of mutual benefit for our respective countries and for our academics, researchers and students alike. And I would

like to take the opportunity to thank the government of India, the High Commissioner and Ms Kamboj for the various initiatives that they have helped to spearhead over the last few months.

Earlier this year Mrs Kamboj and I discussed an array of possible joint ventures between Stellenbosch University and India and I am sure there are more to come in the future. Let me name some of them briefly:

- The funding of a semester chair at the University by the Indian government. This enabled us to bring sought after knowledge and expertise from the Indian continent to our University and the learning opportunities that it afforded our staff and students are just enormous.
- A donation of about 325 books to the University's library. This donation is highly appreciated because it has become very difficult for academic libraries in a country such as ours to afford international publications owing to increases in the prices of books and to exchange rate fluctuations. This collection is a huge acquisition for the Library and Information Services, and the material will be of great value to both students and researchers in the social sciences, economics and literature.

- In addition, the University has also been asked to nominate academics from this institution who would be able to participate in an Indian Fellowship Programme for a period of research and/or teaching of between three and 12 months in India.

In conclusion, I would also like to thank Mr Raman Dhawan, Managing Director of Tata Africa, for their generous donation of R500 000 awarded in the form of 10 Tata Africa Scholarships to postgraduate students at Stellenbosch University. These scholarships cover the students' tuition fees, subsistence (stipend), books and accommodation for a year of study. The awards will be made to the individual students in the course of the evening.

I would now like to introduce our very special guest of honour, His Excellency Mr Rajiv Kumar. Bhatia, High Commissioner of India to South Africa, who will now address us on the topic *New trends in India-Africa relations.*

Mr. Rajiv Kumar Bhatia is India's High Commissioner to South Africa.

A career diplomat, Mr. Bhatia is known for his intellectual inclinations and professional dynamism. He holds a Master's degree in political science from the

University of Allahabad, India. Thereafter, he served as a lecturer in a university college in India for three years.

Since joining the Indian Foreign Service in 1972, Mr. Bhatia served in Indian Embassies in Paris, Beirut, Brussels and Jakarta. More recently, he served as Consul General in Toronto, Canada; High Commissioner to Kenya and Permanent Representative to UNEP and UN Habitat; Ambassador to Myanmar; and Ambassador to Mexico.

In Toronto, the Indo-Canada Chamber of Commerce recognized Mr. Bhatia's contribution to foster business relations by conferring on him the President's Award for 1997. Kenya gave him the opportunity to acquire expertise in multilateral diplomacy, especially during his tenure as the Chairman of Group of 77, Nairobi Chapter in 2001. In Mexico City, he was instrumental in establishing the India-Mexico Business Chamber (IMBC) in 2006.

Mr. Bhatia enjoys writing on a range of issues and has published numerous articles in prestigious newspapers and magazines in India and abroad. He has also given many interviews to media and delivered lectures at universities and other institutions in the countries of his accreditation.

He is particularly interested in arts, culture, history and Indian diaspora. His other interests are yoga, golf and listening to classical music. He loves traveling and has journeyed to nearly 60 countries so far.

Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome His Excellency Rajiv Kumar Bhatia, High Commissioner of India.