

Removal of the HF Verwoerd plaque from the Accounting and Statistics Building,
Victoria St, Stellenbosch University, 17:00, 27 May 2015.

Remarks by Prof Nico Koopman, acting as Programme Director at the event

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Nico Koopman, and I am dean of the Faculty of Theology. I warmly welcome all of you at this very important moment on our campus – students, staff, alumni, management, council members and various partners of Stellenbosch University, especially various members of the Stellenbosch community.

We are gathered here today to remove the Verwoerd plaque from this building. This building has been renamed some years ago – so the act of removing the plaque is highly appropriate.

This act is in some sense a vulnerable one. It can, for instance, be described as too little too late. It is also vulnerable in the sense that it might be interpreted as an act of non-tolerance and vengeance, an act of the stigmatisation and demonisation of a historical period and persons.

The removal of this plaque, however, takes place in the context of the journey of Stellenbosch University. SU is a university that is on an exciting journey of renewal and transformation, a journey from exclusion to inclusion, a journey from diverse and apart to diverse and together, a journey towards excellence through inclusivity and diversity, a journey of access and joint ownership of this institution by all who live in it, a journey of future-orientedness, a journey of liberating and healing impact on all walks of life in African societies.

The act of removing this plaque serves as a confirmation of our commitment to this journey of SU. This act confirms our commitment afresh. This act confirms our fragile and not perfect quest to concretely embody what we commit ourselves to.

Our ceremony this afternoon will not be a long one:

1. I shall invite Dr Wilhelm Verwoerd, grandson of Dr HF Verwoerd to address us;
2. Thereafter the SU Brass Ensemble will render an item;
3. Then I shall call on two students to address us;
4. And thereafter we shall move to the foyer
5. The Rector will then read an official declaration.
6. The Rector, representatives of students and the Stellenbosch community will then dislodge the plaque from its current position and put a SA flag in its place, as a symbol of our unity in diversity
7. Thereafter we shall unite in singing the national anthem.
8. Finally, there will be an opportunity for everyone present to sign the declaration