

DECLARATION

This Declaration is the outcome of a higher education stakeholder summit on 3 October 2016

Preamble

This declaration is the outcome of a multi-stakeholder forum that took place in Johannesburg on 3 October 2016, convened to reach a common position on the prevailing crisis on university campuses in South Africa.

The stakeholders present acknowledge the great strides made towards realizing free higher education, and technical and vocational education and training for the poor. Stakeholder discussions have been ongoing for several months and have assisted government to positively intervene on fee increases for 2017, as announced by the Minister of Higher Education and Training on 19 September 2016.

The current unrest poses great risk to the successful completion of the 2016 academic programme, university property and the safety of students and staff. The summit aimed to agree on the collective steps that should be taken towards a peaceful resolution to the crisis.

The Summit noted:

- **Government's stated position on progressively working towards the provision of fee-free education for the poor.**
- The legitimate demands of the student movement for a student-funding regime that enables access to higher education for all who need financial assistance.
- With extreme concern the criminal acts resulting in wanton destruction of university property, including that of arson.
- The predisposition towards violent confrontation on the part of some student groups, as well as on the part of security forces deployed to maintain the safety and security of individuals and property.
- Students have expressed a strong desire to resume their studies and ensure that campuses re-open to enable the completion of the 2016 academic year.
- A range of consultations with key stakeholders has taken place. The multiple processes that are underway to address the student-funding crisis and progress that is being made in this regard.
- That the fee increase announcement of a maximum of 8% for 2017, includes a commitment by government **to cover the increase for poor and "missing middle"** students, which effectively means that approximately 75% of the student body will not experience a fee increase in 2017.
- The introduction of a new subsidized model that will make fee-free education a reality **for the poor and the "missing middle" at the point of entry to be piloted in 2017 with full introduction in 2018.** This will effectively mean households that earn up to R600 000 per annum will benefit from fee-free education at the point of entry.
- That a Presidential Commission is currently underway to explore the feasibility of new funding models for higher education in South Africa, and will provide a final report in June 2017.

The Summit called for:

- The academic programmes at universities to resume as a matter of urgency in all institutions where these have been halted.
- The continuation of critical work to provide medium and long-term solutions to student funding needs, within the time frames already set out.

- The continuation of dialogue between all parties so that these can contribute to the nature of the solutions that will be put in place.
- Protests, where these occur, to be peaceful and to avoid infringing on the rights of others.

The Summit resolved:

- To unanimously condemn the acts of violence and destruction to property that are taking place on university campuses.
- Security forces should only be deployed in cases where the safety of people and/or property are under threat, and that they must exercise maximum restraint as they work to maintain a safe environment.
- Long-term solutions to student funding that are in the interest of the whole society and of the country, as well as in the interest of universities and students are put in place.
- Support should be afforded to enable the Presidential Commission to speedily conclude its work so that it can contribute to finding the long-term solutions.

Issued by
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