

**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  
Wallenberg Research Centre, STIAS, 15 November 2011**

**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 Jubileumfunds
  - 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.