

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

**Remarks by Prof Wim de Villiers, Rector and Vice-Chancellor.**

Good afternoon, everyone. *Goeiemiddag*. Thank you, all, for being here today to witness this moment in history – our students and staff, Council members, alumni and members of the broader community.

I want to thank all the speakers who spoke before me sincerely. You have given us much food for thought with your insights. I will now read out a statement drawn up to capture today's events, and I invite all of you to sign this statement after we have sung the national anthem.

But before I do so, I want to reiterate that Stellenbosch University is serious about transformation, which is integral to education. On the one hand transformation means addressing – and redressing – what was wrong in the past, and on the other hand it means building a better future for all.

We should always go forward. Sometimes the road will be clear and the journey smooth. Other times the road will be bumpy and the going tough. But that's OK – change is never easy. The most important thing is to keep talking to each other.

As I said at my inauguration, we need an open discussion, a conversation without borders about the future we need to build. I'm glad this circulation of ideas has started. Everyone who makes a contribution is playing an important role. I have received a memorandum from Open Stellenbosch, as list of recommendations from the SRC and a number of inputs from important stakeholders and we are working on a response. Obviously, all conversations must take place in a spirit of understanding and mutual respect. But let the discussion continue – no matter how difficult.

We are removing something from the past today; Now let US work together to put in place the building blocks for the future that we want for our University. Let us talk – and walk the walk of inclusivity together.

I now read this statement on behalf of everyone gathered here:

“The removal of the Verwoerd commemorative plaque from the Accounting and Statistics Building (formerly known as the HF Verwoerd Building) illustrates the commitment of Stellenbosch University to create a welcoming campus for all and to remove obstacles in the path of unity and progress.

“This event serves as an affirmation of the University's acknowledgement of its contribution to the injustices of the past, and its commitment to redress and development in its Strategic Framework (2000).

“We, the witnesses of today's event, undertake to remind our campus and town community of where we come from, and where we are heading – with our democracy” in our country, as well as us as an institution.

*“Die verwydering van die Verwoerd-gedenkplaat uit die Rekeningkunde- en Statistiekgebou (voorheen bekend as die H F Verwoerd-gebou) illustreer die Universiteit Stellenbosch se erns om 'n verwelkomende kampus vir almal te skep en om struikelblokke in die pad van samehorigheid en vooruitgang te verwyder.*

*“Die geleentheid herbevestig die Universiteit se erkenning – in sy Strategiese Raamwerk (2000) – van sy bydrae tot die ongeregtighede van die verlede en sy verbintenis tot regstelling en ontwikkeling.*

*“Ons, die getuies van vandag se geleentheid, onderneem om ons kampus- en dorpsgemeenskap te herinner aan waar ons vandaan kom, en waarheen ons op pad is – met ons demokrasie” in die land, sowel as ons as instelling.*