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Statement by Chancellor of Stellenbosch University, Justice Edwin Cameron

There can be no place at Stellenbosch University (SU) for any practice or behaviour that belittles, degrades or exerts undue power over anyone. I am distressed by allegations that humiliating practices took place at Wilgenhof in the recent past. The widespread dismay at these revelations is fully justified. I am also distressed by suggestions that humiliating disciplinary processes were enforced. In both cases, to my knowledge the University had already taken steps to stop these.

I strongly affirm SU's response to the revelations about Wilgenhof's history and past disciplinary processes. This has my heartfelt support. SU is emerging as one of the leading universities on our continent. I am proud of the fact that under Rector and Vice-Chancellor Prof Wim de Villiers's leadership, the University is a much more diverse, tolerant and inclusive institution than it once was. These vestiges of the past have to be expunged.

The Rector and Vice-Chancellor has established an inquiry into their meaning and significance. I look forward to trying to assist the inquiry in all ways within my power.

I have been asked about events that took place over fifty years ago in Wilgenhof. Many things happened in Wilgenhof and other Stellenbosch residences then, that no one could try to defend today. Though I was never part of Wilgenhof's disciplinary committee, and though I never took part in any of its processes, I later became part of Wilgenhof's broader governance. Of this history, there will be an accounting in the committee process the Rector and Vice-Chancellor has established. I defend nothing that was coercive, degrading and oppressive, to which my younger self may have been party.

For nearly fifty years, I have not been involved in Wilgenhof's governance. Wilgenhof has changed and Stellenbosch has changed. The recent revelations underscore the imperative need for SU and all its parts to renounce the unacceptable things in its past and to embrace a future of tolerance, diversity and deep mutual respect, as it has unequivocally done, and does now, again.

Verklaring deur Oudregter Edwin Cameron, Kanselier van die Universiteit Stellenbosch

Daar kan geen plek by die Universiteit Stellenbosch (US) wees vir enige praktyk of gedrag wat enigiemand verkleineer, afkraak of onbehoorlike mag oor iemand anders gee nie. Ek is ontsteld oor bewerings dat vernederende praktyke in die onlangse verlede by Wilgenhof plaasgevind het. Die wydverspreide ontsteltenis oor hierdie onthullings is ten volle geregverdig. Ek is ook ontsteld oor voorstelle dat vernederende dissiplinêre prosesse afgedwing is. In albei gevalle het die Universiteit na my wete reeds stappe gedoen om dit te stop.

Ek beaam, ten sterkste, die US se reaksie op die onthullings oor Wilgenhof se geskiedenis en vorige dissiplinêre prosesse, en ek ondersteun dit ten volle. Die US word tans gesien as een van die voorste universiteite op ons vasteland. Ek is trots op die feit dat die Universiteit onder die Rektor en Visekanselier Prof Wim de Villiers se leiding, 'n baie meer diverse, verdraagsame en inklusiewe instelling is as wat dit eens was. Hierdie oorblyfsels van die verlede moet uitgewis word.

Die Rektor en Visekanselier het 'n ondersoek geloods na die betekenis hiervan. Ek sien uit daarna om die ondersoek te probeer bystaan op enige manier binne my vermoë.

Ek is uitgevra oor gebeure wat meer as vyftig jaar gelede in Wilgenhof plaasgevind het. Baie dinge het destyds in Wilgenhof en ander Stellenbosch-koshuise gebeur wat niemand vandag kan probeer verdedig nie. Al was ek nooit deel van Wilgenhof se dissiplinêre komitee nie, en al het ek nooit aan enige van die prosesse deelgeneem nie, het ek later deel van Wilgenhof se breër bestuur geword. Van hierdie geskiedenis sal daar 'n verantwoording wees in die ondersoek wat die Rektor en Visekanselier geloods het. Ek verdedig niks wat dwingend, afbrekend en onderdrukkend was, waarvan my jonger self dalk deel was nie.

Vir byna vyftig jaar was ek nie betrokke by Wilgenhof se bestuur nie. Wilgenhof het verander en Stellenbosch het verander. Die onlangse onthullings beklemtoon die behoefte vir die US om die onaanvaarbare praktyke van die verlede te verwerp en 'n toekoms van verdraagsaamheid, diversiteit en diep wedersydse respek te omhels, soos dit onomwonde gedoen het, en nou weer doen.