

MEDIA STATEMENT

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For Immediate use:

MINISTER NZIMANDE WELCOMES THE LAUNCH OF CLIMATE CHANGE STUDIES AT THE STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, welcomes the launch of the School of Climate Studies at Stellenbosch University, which will be officially opened in June 2021.

The establishment of an academic School focusing on climate change is a potentially promising step to enable our academics and students to build a well-rounded body of scientific knowledge and skills to enable not only a better understanding of the problems, but also sustainable responses to a new horizon of challenges facing humanity.

Global humanity is currently faced with the fourfold crises of Covid 19; deepening economic crises; the crisis of families, household and communities to make ends meet; and climate change, Minister Nzimande said.

Minister Nzimande said that climate change is one of our fourfold crises of the early 21st century, the roots of which, he believes, are located in the dominant global economic system, notably, neo-liberal capitalism. Climate change, he contends, is causally connected with centuries of extractive and destructive forms of economic development, with its most voracious contemporary expression, neo-liberal capitalism, now in deep crisis.

Economic destruction of the earth's biosphere and ecological systems in turn has created a crisis in human sustainability, with its most devastating effects felt by the working people and poor across the globe. More recently, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has acted as an accelerant on the widening gulf between rich and poor. These four crises have come to signal a modern-day version of the Four Horsemen of Apocalypse.

"I hope this will set a trend for our other universities and TVET Colleges to establish similar initiatives focusing on various aspects of the multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional challenges and opportunities presented by climate change and its inter-connectedness with other social and natural phenomena," said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande said government hopes that the University will collaborate with other higher education institutions, especially Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs), in promoting new scholarship to face new problems confronting current and

future generations. Such collaboration, in Minister's view, is crucial as no single institution could possibly achieve this task on its own.

“Our Ministry, for the first time brings together higher education with science and innovation, thus presenting a magnificent opportunity to enrich our understanding of the systemic issues rethinking and re-engineering to mitigate and adapt to the vagaries of climate uncertainty.

Minister Nzimande said that according to International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and most of the scientific community, human (anthropogenic) activity has had definite causal effects on global warming and climate change, resulting in increasing temperatures, rising sea levels and a range of other impacts.

“This threatens every aspect of human endeavour, including: water supply, infrastructure, public health, coastal habitats and food security, to mention a few. But we all know that the effects of climate change will be worse in poor and developing countries like our country, South Africa, regardless of its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions,” said the Minister. Nonetheless, it is our duty, for the sake of future generations, to slow down the rate of global climate warming.

Minister Nzimande believes that all South African universities and TVET Colleges must urgently plan their differentiated and collective contributions to help us to not only better understand climate change dynamics, but also to work towards changing the world for a better and more equal humanity.

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