

MEDIA STATEMENT

DATE: 28 July 2022

TO: All Media

ATTENTION: News Editors/ Reporters

For Immediate use:

MINISTER NZIMANDE CONGRATULATES PROFESSOR TSHILIDZI MARWALA ON HIS APPOINTMENT AS THE FIRST AFRICAN RECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY RECTOR

The Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation, Dr Blade Nzimande, congratulates Professor Tshilidzi Marwala for having been appointed as the first African Rector of the United Nations University by the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres. This is indeed a great achievement and accolade for Prof Marwala as well as for our higher education system in South Africa, although it will be a loss for the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and our university system.

The United Nations University (UNU) encompasses thirteen (13) institutes located in twelve (12) countries around the world. The global UNU system is coordinated by UNU Headquarters in Tokyo.

Minister Nzimande said South Africa should be proud to have a black accomplished scholar, an academic administrator and a dedicated researcher who continues to fly the South Africa flag high in the nations of the world. The Minister said that he is confident and hope that Prof Marwala will not completely lose touch with South Africa's higher education system in his new role.

"Prof Marwala has distinguished himself amongst his peers and attained what many, particularly within our black communities, would have thought is insurmountable to a black child, given the South African apartheid history," said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande said Prof Marwala is amongst the most authoritative voices of the Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies as a means to grow the South African economy and create jobs for the youth.

"Furthermore, he is serving in the Presidential Commission on the Fourth Industrial Revolution (PC4IR) which is the Commission charged with guiding the usage of technologies to elevate SA's developmental agenda in line with Vision 2030," said Minister Nzimande.

Professor Marwala is currently the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Johannesburg. He was the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Internationalization (2013-2017) and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment (2009-2013) at the University of Johannesburg. From 2003 to 2008, he progressively held the positions of Associate Professor, Full Professor, and the Carl and Emily Fuchs Chair of Systems and Control Engineering, as well as the SARChI Chair of Systems Engineering at the Department of Electrical and Information Engineering at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Minister Nzimande encourages young and black academics to emulate Prof Marwala by taking advantage of opportunities provided through government research support within public universities.

“In the 2022/23 financial year, through the Department of Science and Innovation, we invested R5 226 955 000 in research productivity in the university sector, up from R1 124 807 000.06 in the 2004/05 financial year,” said Minister Nzimande.

Minister Nzimande said part of the support provided through the Department of Higher Education and Training through the Sibusiso Bengu Development Grant - allocated to the institutions defined as historically disadvantaged.

“All this support we provide in order for us to develop our own crop of internationally acclaimed scholars such as Prof Marwala and many more of his ilk that have been recognised by the global higher education and science community.

Minister Nzimande commends the role played by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Audrey Azoulay, who concurred with the appointment of Prof Marwala following an extensive international search process.

“We wish Prof Marwala all the best, and assure him South Africa’s support in his new role,” concluded Minister Nzimande.

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