

**BERLIN LAUNCH of Stellenbosch University's HOPE Project  
to Alumni & Friends of the University in Germany, 23 October 2010  
Professor Russel Botman, Rector and Vice-Chancellor**

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*Goeie naand, dames en here. Baie welkom hier.*

*Dis mos gebruiklik dat 'n land se diplomatieke perseel oorsee deel van jou eie grondgebied is, so aangesien ons hier is as ambassadeur van die Universiteit Stellenbosch, is julle vanaand weer terug in Matieland. Geniet dit!*

*Guten Abend meine Damen und Herren.* I always wanted to say the following words, and now I have the opportunity, so here goes: *"Ich bin ein Berliner."*

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, thank you so much for coming. Your support means a lot to us.

We are here to talk about Stellenbosch University's HOPE Project. The video we have just seen, would have given you some background. Allow me to highlight a few issues by doing three things:

- I will briefly put the HOPE Project in context;
- I will mention some practical examples what this initiative entails; and lastly
- I want us to explore how we can work together to help make the world a better place.

## **ORIGINS OF HOPE**

The fact that this meeting is taking place in Berlin is very interesting. You see, in a way, the HOPE Project of Stellenbosch University started right here. Let me explain.

When the Berlin Wall was toppled in November 1989, it sent shock waves around the world. It signalled the end of the Cold War, which in South Africa brought a new sense of urgency to negotiations about our political future.

Three months later, Nelson Mandela walked out of prison a free man, and four years later, on 27 April 1994, we held our first non-racial, democratic elections.

Apartheid had been defeated, but that was just the start of the real hard work. Ahead of us lay the task of rebuilding and uniting the country, a challenge that Berliners know all too well.

As was the case here, it stimulated intense debate in our society. Stellenbosch University also had to adapt, and in 1999 this process of reorientation culminated in an important policy document – our “Strategic Framework for the Turn of the Century and Beyond”.

Let me quote just one sentence from it, the first part of which reads: “The University acknowledges its contribution to the injustices of the past ...”

It doesn’t sound like much. But remember, Stellenbosch had the reputation of having been the “cradle of apartheid”.

Yet here it was, not only taking responsibility for its past mistakes, but also – and this is the second part of the sentence – committing “itself to appropriate redress and development initiatives”.

How do you make amends for excluding some people in the past? You allow them in. And that is why our “Strategic Framework” established as an important goal the need to “achieve” equity through building a student body and staff corps demographically more representative of society. We can only feel satisfied that there is fair access when the daughter of the farm worker has the same opportunities as the son of the farmer.

Our “Strategic Framework” also linked “redress” to “the need for development and service in communities and areas previously and currently disadvantaged in the provision of services and infrastructure.”

So, there you have it. The HOPE Project is essentially the practical realisation of the University’s moral decision to break with the past and help build a better future.

We looked around us, and saw that the political liberation that came with the vote in 1994 – or, for that matter, with *uhuru* in the rest of sub-Saharan Africa from 1957 onwards – did not bring freedom from hunger, disease, homelessness, exploitation, corruption, violence, pollution or unemployment. The “walk to freedom” was indeed “a long” one.

However, we realised that as one of Africa’s leading universities, it was our duty to use our key strengths – our academic excellence and cutting-edge research – to be of service to society.

So, we analysed the UN's Millennium Development Goals and our government's strategic development priorities, and distilled the five themes of the HOPE Project.

We are convinced that if we work to eradicate poverty and related conditions, and promote human dignity and health, democracy and human rights, peace and security; as well as a sustainable environment and a competitive industry, then we will change the world.

Let me just clarify something. The HOPE Project does not mean Stellenbosch University has become a development agency or an NGO. But we think part of what it entails to be a good university is to be of relevance to society and not sit isolated in an ivory tower.

Across our faculties and management structures, our leaders and researchers and academics and students have developed 22 academic initiatives designed to make a tangible difference where it matters most.

For instance, as part of the HOPE Project, we have a Food Security Initiative, a Centre for HIV/Aids Management, a Rural Clinical School aimed at producing more doctors for underserved parts of the country, a Unit for Corporate Governance, a Centre for Dispute Settlement and a Centre for Agribusiness Leadership Development, a Water Institute, as well as various initiatives looking at environmental sustainability.

It is important for Stellenbosch University to share its knowledge with others. Earlier this week, we became the first African university to sign the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities. This convention was initiated by Germany's Max Planck Society in 2003, and is aimed at making research freely and widely available to society.

Stellenbosch University is well-placed to spearhead these efforts. In a recent study of doctoral graduate numbers by the Academy of Science of South Africa, we came second, producing 12% of the country's PhDs in 2007. Do you know who came first?

No, it wasn't UCT. We thought we would never beat our old nemesis, but at last we did. UCT came third, and first place went to the University of Pretoria. But if you consider that they are almost twice our size, to come second to them is to come first.

## **JOIN US**

If we want to be of service to society and be a place of excellence, we must ensure that our activities are sustainable. This we cannot do without the help of our partners, networks and supporters. So tonight is not just an information session, but also an invitation to each of you to join the HOPE Project.

Universities worldwide are under tremendous financial pressure as state subsidies decrease and the demands of access, relevance and excellence increase. So, as part of the HOPE Project, we have launched the largest fundraising campaign ever by an African university. Our goal is to raise gifts of at least R1,75 billion (€180 million) by 2015.

## **BENEFACTORS OF HOPE**

Our vision of hope has already been very well supported, both locally and internationally. We have raised R500 million (€51 million) in philanthropic contributions the past three years in the silent phase of the campaign.

However, we need additional support to fully realise our vision of turning Maties into a centre of hope for Southern Africa, Africa and the world.

Speak to Bev Witten or Annamia van den Heever here tonight to make your pledge, or visit the HOPE Project website ([www.thehopeproject.co.za](http://www.thehopeproject.co.za)) for more information on how to make a contribution.

## **CONCLUSION**

Our vision for South Africa and the rest of the African continent is a future free from poverty, where the human dignity of all people is protected, where our social and ecological systems are healthy, and where peace, security and democracy are safeguarded. We want to be seen to have played a role in realising this vision.

The HOPE Project puts into action our commitment to play a role in working for such a country, such a continent, such a world. We think it is the right thing to do. Now is the right time for hope. Future generations deserve nothing less.

Thank you. *Baie dankie. Danke schön.*