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04 October 2022

Vice-Chancellor's welcome address - US Ambassador's Speaking engagement

04 October 2022

Protocol list:

His Excellency, Ambassador Reuben E. Brigety II (PhD)- **U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa**

General Consul Vincent Spera

Honourable MEC for Health, Cllr Madoda Sambatha

Executive Mayor of Mahikeng Local Municipality, Cllr Tshepiso Mphehlo

U.S Embassy and Consulate staff members

Members of the NWU University Management Committee

Members of the NWU Senate

NWU Stakeholders and Partners

Staff and Students

Esteemed guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me take this opportunity to warmly welcome you all to this important lecture. A special welcome to the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Reuben E Brigety II, who is accompanied by General Consul Vincent Spera, and other officials from the U.S Embassy and Consulate. Welcome to South Africa, to the North-West Province, and to the North-West University. As you know we have three campuses. I know that some of you were with us at the Vanderbijlpark Campus, on 22 September 2022, where your band played beautiful music to our staff and students.

His Excellency, we are honoured by your presence here at the North-West University, we look forward to your address to our staff and students on the critical theme - ***“the Role of Academia in Democracy and Human Rights”***. We know that in some parts

of the world including on our continent, academics are not allowed to express their views and exercise their rights. This is the reason we cherish our constitution which guarantees everyone the right to freedom of expression, which includes

- (a) freedom of the press and other media
- (b) freedom to receive or impart information or ideas
- (c) freedom of artistic creativity; and
- (d) academic freedom and freedom of scientific research.

Therefore, academics in our country, and certainly in the North-West University must exercise their rights by conducting research and expressing their views without fear or favour. They must also continue to ensure that students and other stakeholders are exposed to human rights education. Of course, acknowledging that human rights education, as former UN Secretary General once opined, ... “is much more than a lesson in schools or a theme for a day; it is a process to equip people with the tools they need to live lives of security and dignity.”

His excellency, this needs to be one of many engagements especially because the theme serves to address some of the grim issues including inequality, social justice, and redress, and how education could be utilised to address these challenges. We are aware that the United States and South Africa’s bilateral relationship has been going for some time and we believe that this partnership will further enhance our long standing relationship.

As a university we are happy that our students and staff continue to benefit from opportunities offered by the United States Embassy and Consulate. These include but not limited to;

1. Prof Mulanda Mwanza –the Head of Department of Animal Health in the Faculty of Natural and Agricultural Science is a beneficiary of the 6-month Fulbright research grant
2. Dr Shernice Soobramoney – our Director of Global Engagement or Internationalisation, participated in the International Visitor Leadership Programme (IVLP) earlier this year

3. We also acknowledge the presence of Prof. Nishanta Rajakaruna who is a US Scholar currently hosted by the NWU School of Biological Sciences for his teaching-learning and research activities; and
4. As I mentioned earlier, we also extend our gratitude for the performance delivered by the Wings of Swing band at our Vanderbijlpark campus. Our staff and students thoroughly enjoyed the performances.

I have also learned that prior to my tenure as Vice-Chancellor; our Deputy Vice-Chancellor responsible for this (Mahikeng) Campus's Operations and Community Engagement, Prof Sonia Swanepoel and her delegation, had an opportunity to meet with General Consul Vincent Spera, who I also had an opportunity to meet in person during my inaugural event.

His excellency, one of my commitments is to enhance our internationalisation. Therefore, I look forward to you and your office linking us to universities and organisations based both in the United States of America and South Africa.

We hope to strengthen this strategic partnership for mutual benefit to both parties and trust that our audience this morning will use this opportunity to benefit from your wealth of knowledge, including that of the higher education landscape.

Welcome everyone. Please enjoy the proceedings.

Thank you