

## Moses Speech – DUT Bursary Launch

It gives me great pleasure to speak to you today at the launch of the bursary fund, which is a novel, noble, imaginative and forward-looking project of the Durban University of Technology. Added to that is the challenge of catching up with the developed world, especially on the important issue of modern technology, which is the driving force of today's economies. Obviously, the foundation for an ideal society with adequately skilled men and women, capable of bringing about all-round development, is rooted in the sound education and training system.

The role of a University of Technology in addressing this challenge cannot be over-emphasised. In one of its founding documents the **NEW PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICA'S DEVELOPMENT (NEPAD)**, states: "Information and communication technologies, driven by the convergence of computers, telecommunications and traditional media, are crucial for the knowledge- based economy of the future". It goes on to say that the goals of achieving a Common Market and an African Union can benefit immensely from the revolution in information technology. This is a clear indication that our education system needs to produce more people who are geared towards the sciences. People who are simply standing still will be left further behind as the pace of scientific discovery continues to accelerate. The critical question we need to ask is whether our education system is geared towards competing on an equal footing with the best on the continent and the global world.

As we battle to undo the damage of years of apartheid education, we need to simultaneously gear our education system towards the future. DUT must be commended on supporting their students by designing and implementing projects of this nature: projects that focus on providing the necessary support and guidance so that financial constraints no longer are barriers to graduating and deserving students actually do complete their studies. One of the ways in which we can continue to make a dent on grinding poverty and reduce the unemployment levels, is by paying serious attention to the challenge of human resource development. If we ever hope to compete as equals in the global world, then we need to pay greater attention to the knowledge and skills base of our youth. We need these skills in order to adequately respond to the challenges facing us in all spheres of our existence, be it in economics, communication, medicine, agriculture, defence and many others. If we are to respond adequately to the challenges our city, our province and our country faces, we need to ensure that young leaders are well developed so that they become strong leaders in the future. I sincerely believe that for our province to make the necessary and meaningful progress with regard to the many socio-economic challenges that we face, we need skilled and appropriately

trained people. Our need for a younger and more representative group of professors, professionals, scientists, technicians and engineers is critical. We believe that the establishment of this bursary fund will contribute to the achievement of the millennium development goals and strengthen our fight on poverty, unemployment and social exclusion; by providing learners from disadvantaged communities with an opportunity to access quality education. Once these students graduate they will play a significant role in the economic mainstream of the eThekweni Community.

DUT wants to see all students graduate. But many students do not complete their studies because they do not have the finances or access to the finances they need. Many students fall through the cracks. This bursary fund is a stop gap to deal with the financial crisis experienced by students. This bursary fund will solve student financial issues. DUT wishes to enhance corporate businesses and government to partner with them. Twice a year, DUT will grant bursaries from this fund to deserving students. In adopting a student, the bursar will receive a full report on the student's progress. The bursary fund will sponsor and support only students who show their capability and capacity to pass. This fund will be combined with the DUT Throughput fund.

Ladies and gentlemen, this initiative will go a long way in addressing the human resource development needs of the City and the Province. The Bursary Fund we are launching today is intended to fund those students who are deserving of assistance by showing their commitment and dedication to making a better life for themselves and their community. We believe that this Fund will go a long way in ensuring that we as a society support our future leaders and employers and business executives in receiving the sound education and skills they will need in the future. Such a society will encourage and empower its individuals to participate in the emerging knowledge-based economy and support sustainable development.

But DUT cannot undertake this mammoth task on its own. It needs solid partners and collaborative effort to make this venture succeed. DUT would indeed very grateful and encouraged by the involvement of the private sector in addressing this monumental task.

You may be surprised to find out that only 3% of our population in Durban have attained an undergraduate degree and only 1.5% of our population have achieved their honours, Masters and Doctoral Degree. The creation of new knowledge is absolutely vital for a developing economy. It is that which makes us globally competitive. Of what use are all the interventions of government if we are to import human capital to carry out these programmes. We can only grow and develop as an

economy if we have the requisite knowledge and skills. Our matric pass rate is way above that of the province and the country so that is a clear indication that our children who pass matric have the capability to further their studies. What is it that stops them from doing so. The answer is simple: Barriers to financial assistance. By funding this venture, business is not only ensuring that in years to come we have more graduates, but it also contributes significantly to ensuring that the recipients of the bursaries have better opportunities of success in their higher education studies. But I would like to see more members of the business community take an active part in improving the future and standard of higher education in the Ethekekwini Region.

This launch addresses one of the key challenges facing South Africa. The creation of skilled persons able to respond to the human resource demands of our thriving economy. The young people who are beneficiaries of this programme will embark on a learning pathway that has been identified as a scarce skill in the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa (AsgiSA) programme. They face a positive future on completion of their programme. This programme is strategically designed to address our skills needs and also to provide real opportunities for personal development for the students. The education sector has been gearing itself to respond as never before to the government's promise of a better life for all. All levels of the education system have begun to be affected by the need to change and modernise. Recently the skills priorities identified as a part of the Joint Initiative on Priority Skills Acquisition (Jipsa) have served as critical drivers of our skills development plans. We welcome this initiative, because our experience and that of other countries, is that skills development is best undertaken through strong partnership between government, business, and labour.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for inviting me to this very important occasion. Based on the direction being taken by the department of education regarding White Paper 6, you are clearly insightful and forward looking regarding your attempts to remove barriers to entry that our children face when wanting to continue their studies in higher education. I would like to take this opportunity of wishing you well in this endeavour.