

**Message of Congratulations:**

**Inauguration and Investiture of Professor Ahmed Bawa as Vice-Chancellor of the Durban  
University of Technology**

Ms Naledi Pandor, Minister of Science and Technology

Madam Chancellor, Ms Ella Ghandi

Chairperson of Council, Prof Jayram Reddy

Members of Council

Vice Chancellor and Principal, Prof Ahmed Bawa

Executive Management of DUT

Members of Senate

President of the SRC, Leaders of Labour and Student Organisations

Fellow Vice Chancellors and their representatives

Leaders of Business, Industry and Community Organisations

The University Community

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of Higher Education South Africa – the overarching body of executive leaders of South Africa's 23 public universities - I wish to express my sincere appreciation for the invitation to this very important ceremony of investiture. I am also honoured to extend my warm congratulations to Professor Ahmed Bawa on his inauguration and investiture as Vice-Chancellor of the Durban University of Technology. At the same time, I would like to extend a warm and personal welcome to Professor Bawa as the most recent member of this august association. This is indeed a proud and joyful, yet a landmark moment for you and your loved ones, for your colleagues at DUT and for your peers in higher education in South Africa and beyond.

Now, inaugurations, many a times pompous and decadent but hopefully mostly dignified, well meaning and unsullied, we are told, date back to ancient Greece as the opportunity for the formal investiture of a person into high office, and it marks the formal assumption of office or position of authority.

And so today is that day that marks the rights of passage and the entry of Professor Bawa into the distinguished community of universities' most senior executive leaders. It is indeed an office, and a position of authority and leadership which we shall not assume lightly, nor take for granted, but shall do so with considerable and ongoing thought, reflection, deliberation and presence of mind. And so this afternoon we all look forward to Professor Bawa inaugural address.

Higher Education South Africa has undergone significant changes since it came into being in 2005. At that time it was focussed primarily on the typical in-house issues that confronted Vice-Chancellors on a day-to-day basis. Over the past five years we have increasingly understood our role as one of advising and of working closely with state departments and institutions in order to protect and foster the sustained quality and excellence of teaching, learning and research, and of access, transformation, resourcing, and the growth and development of the sector. As a consequence we have drawn upon and mobilized relevant expertise for dealing with this range of diverse issues.

It is this network of experience, knowledge and expertise that Professor Bawa will be able to access via HESA's structures. Off course, HESA will also rely on his experience and strategic insight in order to bolster the collective voice of higher education leadership in this country. For the institutional, spatial, social, economic and political locations where we operate from, and which simultaneously frame and liberate our endeavours, enriches and nurtures each one of us as well as the collective.

Further, the capability and resolve of any organisation lies in the balance that it is able to achieve – at leadership level – between long-standing members, the veterans, and new entrants, the novices. And it is fitting and correct that HESA is acquiring a new generation of leaders at a time when the opportunities facing the university in the context of a developmental state are extensive and urgent. Moreover, these opportunities are perfectly suited to the core business of universities of technology and comprehensive universities. Specifically, the inclusion of FET Colleges and SETAs into the mandate of the Department of Higher Education and Training, in turn, inevitably influences the mandate of our institutions.

Observe in particular unemployment and the skills profile of our nation, and the fact that some 3 million young people are without work, and not in a college or training institution. Observe also the hunger for access to higher education with tens of thousands of young people turned away from our universities this year – for after all, universities are the “hope factories” of this nation. It is thus fair to say that the future success of higher education, and of our country, will depend to a great extent on how our universities actively manage their interface and alignment with FET Colleges and SETAs. Thus DUT is ideally suited to place itself at the centre of South Africa's post-school education renewal.

However, for DUT to achieve its vision and strategic objectives it will require definitive executive leadership. As we know, in 2002, the Technikons ML Sultan and Natal engaged in a voluntary merger and as a result many institutions looked to the then named DIT as a benchmark for their own impending mergers. It is fair to say that it was not an easy merger and that it was fraught with contestations for power and authority. It was a great relief for the entire sector when DUT could finally assert itself as a post-merger university and could begin the long journey of defining, nurturing and consolidating its identity and brand. It is important to acknowledge that Prof Bawa assumed his duties in September last year and already there are clear signs of leadership and managerial purpose.

Prof Bawa returned to South Africa following a period as Associate Provost and Professor of Physics at the City University of New York. Prior to working abroad, he held the position of Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of KwaZulu Natal. Members of HESA clearly remember his work as the former Chair of the Board of the National Research Foundation and his valuable work with the National Advisory Council of Innovation. He brings with him the rare insights and skills base of a physicist who thoroughly understands higher education management.

Ahmed, I am confident that you will be able to inspire and lead DUT to new heights of sustained success and achievement, and I extend Higher Education South Africa's warm congratulations to you. We pledge to work with DUT towards achieving the vision and direction you are setting for its future. May that future be filled with success for you personally, your management team, the university, the province and South Africa.

I thank you.