

REMARKS AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF COUNCIL

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'DCM' followed by a stylized flourish.

Your Majesty,

Hon Deputy Minister of Education and Training

Chairman and Members of Council,

It is always with great pleasure and privilege to welcome Your Majesty and Members of Council to the Annual Meeting and onto the campus. I suppose since we are still in the first month of 2019, it is not too late to also convey our best wishes and compliments of the year to everyone present.

The Annual Meeting is a statutory event where two items that throw light of the wellbeing or otherwise of the University are presented. These are (1) the Audited Financial Statements and (2) the Vice Chancellor's Annual Report. Both these agenda items are important tools of corporate governance. They give Council, as the supreme governing body, insight into the institution's performance and enable it a firm handle on the University's strategic direction as a Going Concern. From the Exit Meeting with the Auditors assigned by the Auditor General, I was greatly gratified that we may have drawn an irreversible line below audit disclaimers that have haunted the University for more than thirty years. If this perception and understanding are well founded, NUL is well on the

road to clean audits. To that extent I pay homage to the hard work of the University Bursar, her staff as well as the co-operation of all University staff in their endeavor to comply with international financial management standards. Along with other positive indexes in other sectors our University, like a phoenix, is rising once again as a center of excellence which it should always have been.

Your Majesty, 2019 is a defining year for NUL. This Annual Meeting is set against the backdrop of major changes that must happen this year. All things being equal, this is the last Annual Meeting overseen by this Management and Council and it thus necessarily an appropriate platform to bring to Council's attention some important impending developments.

I seize opportunity to announce that, I, as Vice Chancellor will not be seeking to renew my contract when it expires in the months ahead, and I may well leave earlier, contingent on how Council advises itself. Similarly, we note that the Pro Vice Chancellor's contract expires later in the year. Already the University has been without a substantive University Librarian for some time, and recruitment in this regard has not met with much success. Equally important is the fact that the contract of the Registrar who is also the Secretary of Council is up for review. In terms of the National University of Lesotho Act, all these officers constitute the Executive Management of the Institution, the engine that has ensured the successes of the University hitherto.

As if these changes in the leadership and management of the University will not be enough, this thirteenth Council's term of office also expires in September.

Council must therefore quickly get down to the business of searching for new managers of the University in accordance with the Act and Statutes of the University to ensure a seamless transition and continuity. In the

same vein Management will be advising relevant stakeholders to initiate processes leading to the constitution of the 14th Council.

I view the eminent departure of some of us from the helm of NUL as necessary renewal that should lead to the infusion of new energy and new vision to propel this historic institution forward. In the past four years NUL has turned the corner in a decisive manner from a staid institution characterized by discord, ill-discipline, inefficiencies and inertia.

Numerous new course offerings and programmes have been introduced. Scores of other courses and programmes have been reviewed for modernization and many have received Council on Higher Education full or probationary accreditation. A couple of other exciting academic and business initiatives, such as semesterisation of tuition and mainstreaming technology in the provision of students and staff services are presently in the offing. A growing cohort of staff have acquired higher qualifications, including PhDs even in disciplines where the tradition was lacking. All Faculties, including the Institute of Extra Mural Studies, run postgraduate programmes thus opening exciting opportunities for Basotho and expatriates to pursue higher studies at NUL.

Research and Innovation output is now comparable with that of many a university anywhere. NUL is now a stable, cohesive and exuberant institution focused on its national mandate. It is indeed not surprising that achievements and strides in all sectors of its endeavors have changed public perception about the NUL. They have further deepened the understanding of the importance of Higher Education in the minds of all and sundry. I view these and many other achievements not mentioned with a great degree of satisfaction and pride. I can say

without any fear of contradiction whatsoever, that the mission we set ourselves has been achieved.

Notwithstanding, the risk of reversing the gains made, are real and imminent. The deterioration of the financial support to the University has reached a tipping point with Government subvention dropping from M132M in 2008 to a possible M65M in 2019. Since I have been in office three Governments have exchanged office. The one constant about them is how they all have failed to address and put to bed the grave financial position of the University. While countries on the African continent have over the years launched scores of public universities to equip the young generation with skills for the four industrial revolution, ours cannot even resource one university which it inherited from someone else for that matter!!! Courtesy of such indifference on the part of the proprietor, staff salaries were last reviewed in 2006 at NUL, while research and conference grants remain where they were in the early eighties. In the circumstances, high caliber academics find it untenable to ply their trade at this historic institution. This 13th Council will recall of its own endeavors to bring this debilitating situation to Government attention. Regrettably, it has nothing to show for the efforts.

Allow me to conclude these remarks on the note of expression of gratitude. As I prepare to walk into the twilight of my tour, it would be remiss of me not to thank You, Your Majesty, for the support and encouragement you have always rendered me personally and to the University. I will certainly miss the warm working relations we have had and the very keen interest you devote to the success of the NUL.

In 2013 I joined the 11th Council as an external member. I recall vividly how proceedings in Council were acrimoniously and argumentative. They would proceed until late into the night symptomatic of the difficult relations within the University as a whole. The situation changed

remarkably during the 12th Council. That change was not accidental. It marked the maturity of the 12th Council and the adroitness of Chairman, Mr Mokhele Likate, with whom on becoming the Vice Chancellor we shared the same vision and had fantastic relations. I wish to thank him heartily. I saw when the maturity of the 12th Council became the hallmark of the 13th Council. A key factor between the Board or, Council as the case may be, is the restraint the Board must exercise to leave management to manage while it focuses on governance. This space was certainly accorded us and it ensured good working relations between Council and the current management. Your Chairman, Mr Tseko Bohloa, with his relaxed manner in the conduct of meetings and his legendary mirth made tough work seem so easy. I wish to thank you members of Council and the Chairman, who, if the truth be told became a true friend.

In due course I hope I will have time to thank members of the University Management, all staff and students with whom I developed very deep relations of co-operation and understanding.

I thank you for listening.