



The South African Institute for
Advancement

Media Statement by Inyathelo-The South African Institute for Advancement
For immediate release: 5 November 2009

Aggressive, holistic educational programmes needed in Africa

Africa needs aggressive, holistic educational programmes and good governance to become a major global player in the next 25 to 50 years. This was the essence of the closing presentation by Narciso Matos at the Inyathelo Our World Our Responsibility conference in Cape Town this afternoon.

Matos, a Mozambican who has held high-level academic, administrative and political positions in his country and internationally, acknowledged that the continent had serious challenges, but said that Africans needed themselves to overcome the problems they faced. Citing the "glass - half-full or half-empty" illustration, he reminded his audience: "We can either help fill the glass or, using the same energy, break it."

Allying himself to the concept of an African renaissance, Matos said the primary requirement for development in Africa was good, quality educational and training programme for, without it, nothing would come to pass. In particular illiteracy had to be conquered, particularly amongst women.

Education should be of such a nature that it imparted meaningful skills and enabled people to lead useful lives. This included vocational training that recognised the value of apprenticeships.

A diversified private and public educational system should be an integral part of the programme.

Turning to the role of universities, Matos said that there should be quality research that would

- contribute to the overall development process of the continent;
- transform international knowledge into local knowledge, and vice versa;
and
- reform countries.

Integral to the development of Africa was the need for cultural re-identification: "We must dare to imagine an African world that is not defined by the World Bank or the IMF, but one that comes out of Africa."

Having said that, he acknowledged that Africa would not develop in isolation. The continent had to be open (to other influences) but it should also be bold enough to identify with and leverage some of the advantages inherent in it. The continent boasted great biodiversity, unique ecological systems, some of which had still to be discovered. Attention should also be focussed on studying the continent's bio-genetic resources, and developing industries that arose from this.

"We are not a poor continent, even though we are impoverished," he noted.

The fact that the continent also had a young population was also an advantage. While there were major issues to be faced, such as poverty and disease, there was a young population that could be developed.

Turning to the need for good governance, Matos said that notwithstanding the negative conditions in countries such as Somalia, there was an improving climate of political change, with more countries embracing democracy, the rule of law, respect for human lives and human rights, among others.

But there was no substitute for competency, and this had to be pursued aggressively.