

[DRAFT: Embargoed until delivery; Subject to change; Compare against delivery]

2nd Annual Social Justice Summit

A project of the Law Trust Chair in Social Justice, Faculty of Law, Stellenbosch University (SU)

"All hands on deck to leave no one behind in the post COVID-19 recovery agenda"

Online event, live from the studio at the Manor House, SPIER on the R310 outside Stellenbosch,
08:15, Wed 4 Nov 2020

Welcoming address by SU Rector and Vice-Chancellor Prof Wim de Villiers

- Thank you. Good morning, everyone. And on behalf of Stellenbosch University, welcome to the 2nd annual Social Justice Summit – this year taking place online, which has become the “new normal” in this time of COVID-19.
- Stellenbosch University is honoured to be associated with the Social Justice Summit. As you know, it’s the brainchild of Prof Thuli Madonsela, who holds the Law Trust Chair in Social Justice in our Faculty of Law. Congratulations, Prof Madonsela, with yet again putting together a formidable programme!
- This event brings together an impressive array of people and groupings interested in advancing social justice, a cause which is certainly most important – even more so in 2020.
- What was supposed to be a time of ‘perfect vision’ turned into a nightmare following the outbreak of coronavirus disease 11 months ago. The pandemic has since claimed more than a million lives worldwide, including more than 19 000 in South Africa.

- And the livelihoods of more than a billion people have been threatened in the wake of the economic fallout from the crisis.
- Just in our country, nearly 3 million jobs were lost between February and April alone and more than a decade's worth of employment growth was wiped out in the first six months of the year.
- Shocking as these are, they are but some of the findings of a collaborative project tracking the socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 in our country, led by Stellenbosch University researchers.
- Other disturbing findings are that the rates of not only hunger but also depression have doubled compared to the time before COVID-19 and that 40% of school days will be lost for most children in South Africa this year.
- What do we do in the face of such devastation?
- That is a question that speaks directly to social justice, as does the theme of this Summit: "All hands on deck to leave no one behind in the post COVID-19 recovery agenda".
- Before the coronavirus crisis, we were already straining under the weight of unemployment, poverty, inequality, corruption, etc. Now the challenges are so much larger.
- What to do, what to do? Well, that's what we are here to discuss, aren't we?

- One thing's for certain, and that is that we have our work cut out for us.
- Speaking of "cut out" – let me share an exiting development with you. Yesterday, we unveiled a new art installation in front of the Old Main Building on our Stellenbosch campus, housing our Faculty of Law.
- It's a very interesting piece. It consist of three large metal plates with the Preamble to the Constitution of South Africa cut out in three languages – Afrikaans, English and isiXhosa.
- The project is part of Stellenbosch University's drive to create a more inclusive institution. Celebrating the Constitution is perfect for this purpose because it lays the foundation for a democratic and open society in South Africa. And the principle of transformative constitutionalism is central to contemporary legal education.
- The art installation will serve as a constant reminder that we've come a long way – both in South Africa and at Stellenbosch University.
- But that does not mean we have arrived, that nothing more remains to be done. To the contrary.
- The attainment of social justice, human rights, improving people's quality of life, building national unity – the attainment of the very ideals mentioned in the Preamble to the Constitution remain work in progress.

- So, we have our work cut out for us ... literally!
- At Stellenbosch University, we have made a commitment to be a force for good in the transformation of South Africa into a place of opportunity for all, a place of shared prosperity and a place where there's sustainable peaceful coexistence.
- That is a clear break with our past and a commitment to help create a better future for all of us by tackling the grand challenges of society.
- There are many, but at the global level, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set by the United Nations provide a useful outline of societal challenges to focus on. The overall drive is to "end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity".
- Now, as I said at this Summit last year, the thing about societal challenges is that they can't be solved in isolation. We all have to work together to find solutions.
- We have representatives of various sectors at this Summit. We must all do our part – universities, the rest of civil society, the state, and also business.
- In order to leave no one behind in the post COVID-19 recovery agenda, the M-Plan for Social Justice needs a strong coalition that seeks to end poverty and drastically reduce structural inequality.
- So, friends, the stage is set for meaningful engagement today. I wish you all fruitful discussions.