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Judge Navi Pillay to speak on advancing human rights in SA and the world

Annual Steve Biko Memorial Lecture on 11 September 2014, 18h00, Jameson Hall, Upper Campus – to be streamed live on www.uct.ac.za

"In many ways, the life of Bantu Stephen Biko as a human rights defender epitomises what the world expects from each and every one of us in Africa and globally: to fight for the fundamental freedoms and principles of human dignity, equality and human rights for all," says Judge Navanethem (Navi) Pillay ahead of delivering the 15th Annual Steve Biko Memorial Lecture at the University of Cape Town.

The lecture will be held on Thursday, 11 September 2014, in Jameson Hall, Upper Campus, at 18h00. Drawing on her experience in the area of social justice, gained over three decades, the former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights will speak on "Advancing Human Rights in South Africa and the World". In 2010, UCT awarded Judge Pillay an honorary doctorate in law for her momentous and sustained contribution towards advancing human rights.

Judge Pillay says: "South Africa's struggle against apartheid not only influenced the United Nation's Human Rights agenda, but also created the expectation that South Africa would emerge as a principled champion of fundamental human rights on the international scene. People, not only in Africa, but all over the world, look to South Africa for moral leadership. We can, and should do more to deliver on this promise."

The Steve Biko Memorial Lecture, hosted annually by UCT in partnership with the Steve Biko Foundation, commemorates the life and death of one of the country's most influential leaders in the struggle against apartheid. It also acknowledges Steve Biko's intellectual contribution towards the Black Consciousness Movement. Each memorial lecture is an opportunity to explore the contemporary relevance of the life and legacy of Biko, central to which is the individual's role in advancing social justice.

During her tenure at the UN, Judge Pillay visited over 50 countries to offer expertise to governments on how to deal with human rights violations. Her office investigated various grounds of discrimination that had not been addressed before. These included discrimination experienced by the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community; people with albinism;

minority groups; migrants; and people in the caste-based system.

For example, in her report to the UN Human Rights Council Judge Pillay recommended that laws used to criminalise individuals on grounds of homosexuality be repealed. The former UN High Commissioner also investigated attacks on persons with albinism and called for a comprehensive strategy to eradicate violence and discriminatory practices affecting people with albinism. She further advocated for national institutional mechanisms to be developed to protect and promote rights of people with albinism.

Another example is that, during an Anti-Caste Discrimination Alliance meeting held in London, United Kingdom, in 2013, Judge Pillay pointed out that the caste-based system and other related forms of discrimination (humiliation, exclusion and poverty) had an impact on millions of people worldwide. She advocated for changes in equality legislation, and said social and political commitment should be renewed to eliminate the caste-based system.

About Judge Navi Pillay

Judge Pillay has had an illustrious career. She became the first woman to start a law practice in her home province of KwaZulu-Natal (then Natal) in 1967. Over the next few years, she acted as a defence attorney for anti-apartheid activists, exposing torture and helping to establish key rights for prisoners on Robben Island.

After lecturing at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and later serving as Vice-President of the then University of Durban-Westville Council, Judge Pillay was appointed as acting judge in the South African High Court in 1995. In the same year the UN General Assembly elected her to be a judge on the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, where she served for eight years.

In 2003, she was elected as a judge in the International Criminal Court in The Hague, where she worked until September 2008. Thereafter, she assumed her duties as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. In South Africa, as a member of the Women's National Coalition, she contributed to the inclusion of the equality clause in the country's Constitution that prohibits discrimination on grounds of race, gender, religion and sexual orientation.

Media accreditation:

Media who wish to attend the lecture need to apply for accreditation, due to limited space. There will be an opportunity for the media to ask Judge Pillay questions following the lecture. **Please contact Kemantha Govender on 021 650 5672 or kemantha.govender@uct.ac.za before 16h00 on Wednesday, 10 September 2014, for media accreditation.**

Public attendance:

Members of the public wishing to attend the lecture can collect tickets from 08h00 to 17h00 on 8 to 10 September 2014 from the UCT Communication and Marketing Department at Welgelegen, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank. All enquiries can be directed to Sharifa Martin on 021 650 5816 or Sharifa.Martin@uct.ac.za.

Tickets will also be available from 17h00 on the evening of the lecture at the entrance to

Jameson Hall.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

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