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**12 July 2019**

## **UCT part of U7+ alliance to address most pressing global challenges**

Following the culmination of the inaugural [U7+ Alliance](#) Summit in Paris, University of Cape Town (UCT) Vice-Chancellor Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng was among the five presidents speaking on behalf of universities and sharing the core principles and the conclusions for action.

Professor Phakeng was one of the chosen speakers at a media conference held on this week to mark the end of the annual two-day summit, which took place from 9-10 July in Paris under the high patronage of the President of France, Emmanuel Macron.

The summit, which was attended by 48 universities from 18 countries, voted on six principles. Presenting on **Principle 2**, Professor Phakeng reiterated on behalf of the U7+ that universities have a distinctive responsibility to train and nurture responsible and active citizens who will contribute to society, from the local to the global level.

“This principle speaks to the centrality of our students in achieving the goals of the U7+ alliance of world universities. As an alliance we recognise that students are key and our job is not just to produce graduates who are technically and scientifically skilled but graduates who embody the values that are needed in our society,” said Professor Phakeng.

UCT committed to specific examples of supporting this principle. These are:

- Increasing the scope of our partnerships so that institutions work with a wide variety of actors in their communities and beyond.
- Emphasising the educational and civic value of community engagement.
- Underlining the importance of exposure to an international experience for our students and to cultural diversity for future generations.

Professor Phakeng emphasised: “The sustainability of the work we do lies in the quality of the graduates we produce, which lies not just in their scientific ability but the values they bring to society.”

The rest of the six principles by the U7+ are:

**Principle 1.** We recognise that the U7+ embodies our common will to identify and address the global challenges our contemporary societies face in order to accelerate the development of solutions. We commit to pursuing joint action through the U7+, including meeting each year in the context of the G7 process, so that our actions can weigh in the discussions and contribute to making positive change a reality.

**Principle 3.** We recognise that our universities have a major role to play in addressing the environmental issues and challenges to sustainability such as climate change, biodiversity and energy transition. This should include leading by example on our own campuses.

In supporting this principle, UCT committed promoting that all students, beginning with undergraduates, will have access to courses related to climate, biodiversity and sustainability during their studies – be it in traditional format or online. This would be as a way of enabling exposure to the key challenges and mitigation strategies with regards to the earth. Such courses might include experiential learning opportunities on our campuses and/or in the community.

**Principle 4.** We recognise that universities have a distinctive and major responsibility in widening access to education and promoting inclusion and opportunity. We will also foster respectful and evidence-based public debate, in order to combat polarisation in our society.

UCT committed to specific examples of supporting this principle:

- Widening access and success for students by promoting routes to university and accompanying students from marginalised backgrounds in their curricula, in order to facilitate social mobility.
- Ensuring that our university continues to reach beyond academia, to engage with the wider public in local communities and organisation, and focus on sharing research results on key societal challenges.
- Leveraging our existing capacities in entrepreneurship, social innovation and incubation in order to create economic impact and ensure societal impact. We are in a unique position to share practices within our universities to empower future generations of entrepreneurs to create economic impact and social well-being.

**Principle 5.** To engage with stakeholders and solve complex issues of global relevance we recognise that universities must promote interdisciplinary research and learning, in particular bridging in our research and teaching between social sciences, humanities, the life sciences and STEM disciplines.

In supporting this principle, UCT and a number of other U7+ universities committed to collectively pursuing and creating interdisciplinary and cross-border research projects that have a societal impact on the areas captured by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in particular food and health, climate and energy transition, sustainability, and equal rights and opportunities.

**Principle 6.** We recognise that the U7+ has the power to serve as a lab to consolidate best practices that can be shared both within our network and more broadly with universities and similar institutions worldwide for inspiration.

The U7+ brings together universities from G7 countries and beyond, who are committed to academic freedom and scholarly values and convinced of the key role of universities as global actors, to engage in discussions leading to concrete action to address pressing global challenges. These universities recognise that students, faculty and staff are instrumental in the definition and the implementation of the U7+ actions.

The first summit, held in Paris in the context of the G7, was a unique opportunity for university leaders to discuss a common agenda and establish a space for universities' action in today's global landscape.

- [Watch the media conference.](#)

***ENDS***

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