



Welcome messages

Prof R A Mogotlane
Vice Principal , University of Pretoria

Friends, I bring you greetings from the Rector of the University of Pretoria, Prof Calie Pistorius who would have dearly loved to be here to welcome you in person. He is a great one for all facets of information technology as a weapon against the maladies of man on earth, especially on this continent of Africa. But, alas, he is engaged elsewhere with pressing national matters.

We, of Africa, as the world knows, are riven with disease, famine, wars, awkward weather plus other disadvantages. We are at war with these maladies. The fight of necessity has to be multifaceted. Like in all wars when your forces are dulled and your edge is blunted and your strength is exhausted and your supplies are gone, others will take advantage of your debility and rise up. Then, even if you have wise advisers you cannot make things turn out well in the end. Skilful military operations tend to be swift and last a short while. We have to agree that our skill in fighting these non-military wars on our continent is limited. These wars are protracted.

The weapons we use are sadly ineffective, and to my mind one important reason for this, is a lack of information.

Our people are not informed, hence the food we eat is, on occasion, lethal. It is inadequate, hence we suffer malnutrition . We are malnourished and thus cannot work or attend school.

We do not work and our children do not benefit from schooling, hence ignorance takes firmer hold. Ignorance makes us vulnerable to predators, even human ones.

It is not necessary for me to tell you that countries that are self-sufficient in food, especially protein, are advanced (and here I mean sustainable and certifiably safe protein from healthy animals).

It is not given to us to have more than one life-time, unless you believe in reincarnation. When you good people ultimately depart from this earth you want to leave some imprint of yourselves, thus achieving a sort of immortality. The good you leave behind will be enjoyed by others and not by yourselves. This idea is captured in a most poignant military inscription. "For your tomorrow, we gave our today". For us, fortunately, it does not have to be this sacrificial. Gifts take many forms.

I recognise your activities here as working towards giving us that crucial gift to fight all maladies i.e. the gift of information on how to access that sine qua non of the future of humanity i.e. knowledge.

There is pain and sorrow in lives all over. It is tough out there. I daresay you understand this. People do differ in appearance, in intelligence and possessions but we in this University of Pretoria believe and are ready to affirm that human instincts, passions and feelings are very similar. The pain of hunger, of disease, of war, must be alleviated sooner than later. That you are an important cog in that wheel, whether you know it or not, is cause for congratulation. Someone must get the solutions. Governments probably, but with your involvement. If information dissemination relies on electricity, and this latter is an indifferent commodity in some needy areas, there will be a need to improvise, innovate, to get the information in.

Yet again, on behalf of the Rector of the University of Pretoria, welcome here. Enjoy yourselves as you share information on how to disseminate the best practise messages.

May this conference not turn out to be just another talk show.

Thank you!