

ADDRESS BY PREMIER DR PHOPHI RAMATHUBA AT THE SEFAKO MAKGATHO HEALTH SCIENCES UNIVERSITY CONVOCATION FUNDRAISING AND ALUMINI AWARDS GALA DINNER, CSIR INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE, PRETORIA

Programme Director, King David Mashabela,
Limpopo Health MEC, Ms Dieketseng Mashego,
Chancellor of Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University, Dr Penny Moumaka,
Vice Chancellor, Prof Tandi Matsha-Erasmus,
Chairperson of the University Council, Ms Nontlaza Sizani,
President of the SMU Convocation, Mr Japhta Phala,
Members of the Convocation,
Esteemed Business Community,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Riperile, Lokovhela, Thobela, Good evening, Goeie naand.

It is with honour and deep reverence that I stand before you on this significant night of great purpose, a night where vision meets responsibility, and compassion transforms into collective action. This evening should be a celebration of possibility, of humanity's timeless commitment to heal, to serve, and to build.

Tonight, we are united not merely by ceremony, but by a shared calling to invest in the next generation of healers who will carry forward the torch of science, empathy, and service. We are here to affirm that the future of health in South Africa, will be defined not by scarcity, but by solidarity; not by limitation, but by the limitless potential of those who dare to dream and serve humanity through healing hands.

There is something profoundly beautiful about imagining a future where our health institutions are led by our own sons and daughters, bright minds shaped in our lecture halls, inspired by our stories, and driven by our values. A future where the next generation of healers not only cure illnesses, but also heal the wounds of inequality, poverty, and despair.

Programme Director, when we look into the eyes of our young medical students, we must not just see learners, but we should see the custodians of tomorrow's health systems. We should see the dream of a South Africa that stands tall, equipped, and self-sufficient in responding to her own health challenges. That is the future we are gathered here tonight to invest in, a future built on faith, science, compassion, and collective responsibility.

The theme of this evening, "Investing in South Africa's Future of Health", could not be more timely. It speaks directly to our shared responsibility to build a sustainable healthcare system anchored on innovation, education, and leadership.

If we want to invest in the future of health, we must begin by strengthening education and training pipelines. We must expand access to health sciences education through scholarships and bursaries, especially for learners from rural and disadvantaged

backgrounds. We must modernise our curricula to include leadership, ethics, digital health, and innovation. Above all, we must create mentorship networks that connect young professionals with experienced practitioners, so that wisdom continues to flow from one generation to the next.

All of these don't come cheap, but by investing in research, innovation, and technology. Our health innovation hubs and research grants for young scientists will ensure that the next generation is equipped to solve local problems with local solutions. If we are to realise this dream, we should integrate telemedicine, artificial intelligence, and data analytics into our health systems because the future of health is not only clinical, it is digital.

We must also build leadership and management capacity. By introducing leadership programmes, global fellowships, and interdisciplinary learning, we can nurture well-rounded health leaders who are not just medical experts, but visionary thinkers and compassionate decision-makers.

And yes, we must strengthen health infrastructure and work environments ensuring that our hospitals, clinics, and laboratories are adequately resourced and technologically advanced. Let us reward innovation, recognize excellence, and create career pathways that retain our skilled professionals within the public health system.

Programme Director, investing in the future of health cannot be done by the government alone. It requires a coalition of hope, a partnership between public institutions, the private sector, academia, and communities. This is why gatherings like tonight's are so critical. They remind us that together, we can build something lasting and transformative.

I am happy to learn that the proceeds from last year's Fundraising Gala Dinner assisted over fifty medical students to continue their studies. Fifty young people who, without this support, might have seen their dreams delayed or destroyed. That is the true meaning of empowerment. Tonight, we have an opportunity to multiply that impact.

This gala is more about raising possibilities. It is about rewriting the narrative that Africans can only thrive through handouts. We must tell a new story, one of Africans coming together to fund the future of our health system.

Let me remind you of the most powerful verse in the Bible found in Proverbs 11:24 in the Message Bible that says, "The world of the generous gets larger and larger, while the world of the stingy gets smaller and smaller." Indeed, generosity expands our collective future. Every cent contributed tonight is a seed sown into the garden of tomorrow's healthcare system.

Every generation of healers stands on the shoulders of those who came before them. By giving tonight, you become part of that legacy, the shoulders upon which tomorrow's doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and scientists will stand tall. You may never meet the

beneficiaries of your generosity, but your contribution will echo through every life they save, every community they serve, and every innovation they create.

Let us, therefore, make it possible for our next generation of healers to rise to being confident, competent, and compassionate. Let us make it possible for a young woman from a rural village to become a surgeon. Let us make it possible for a young man from a township to become a health policy leader. Let us make it possible for this continent to heal itself.

Because when we invest in health, we are not just investing in medicine, we are investing in hope, in dignity, in humanity, and in the future of our country.

Former State President Thabo Mbeki once said, "We must build the capacity of our people to think, to act, to produce and to create, for it is through their own efforts that they will transform their conditions and shape their destiny"

I thank you.