



SOUTH AFRICA

2022 Tertiary Institutions CDE & Voter Registration Campaign National Launch CEO's Speaking Notes

Date: 22 March 2022
Time: 13h00 – 14h00
Venue: Wits University, Main Campus

BUILDING TOMORROW, TODAY

Good day, ladies and gentlemen

I am extremely excited to be here today, in the heart of South Africa's biggest city to join hands with you in building your own – and nobody's else's – future.

Many South Africans have paid sacrifices and some have paid the ultimate price to give us the democracy that we all enjoy today. Those generations, to whom we owe a debt of gratitude, have played their part. Sadly, some have passed on. Their date has come and gone.

Today we are here to talk and celebrate our time and the future. Today we are here to celebrate you. You are the future of this country. You are South Africa's today, you are South Africa's tomorrow and you are South Africa's the future.

However, as we celebrate, it is important to remind ourselves that while the generations that came before us took arms and did many things to fight for freedom, ours is a different and special task. Our historical mission is to deepen and grow the democracy in the country. The founding fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters of our nation, have bequeathed this historical mission on us.

Our epoch is vastly different from those of the architects of our freedom. But so is our mission. Our biggest struggle is to protect and grow our democracy. In this regard, our biggest and perhaps the only weapon is our vote.

However, to be able to vote you need to have done a few things in compliance with electoral prescripts.

The fundamental step towards voting is enlistment on the voters' roll. If you don't register, you cannot vote and if you cannot vote, you cannot use this constitutional right. In other words, you can't play an active part in building a South Africa of your dreams.

The Electoral Commission is here as a partner and extends a hand to you and asks you to join us in nurturing and building our electoral democracy.

We do so because we believe in you. We believe in your amazing ability to build the future that you want, just like the great Nelson Mandela did, many years ago, when he was your age.

Today we start a march, a movement and a way of life. Today, my friends, we are making voting hip!

Today we start a march, a movement and a way of life. Today, my friends, we are cancelling the non-voters and making voting hip!

Today we take charge of our lives and our future!

No one else.

No else should.

Only you can!

The digital revolution has provided us with technology that enables us to play the role in the historical mission bestowed on us. In the palm of our hands, at a click, we can do a number of things to build our future; to get ready to vote or to check that we are correctly registered.

It is important that you play your part because research shows that electoral abstention among the youth is a point of concern but you can change all of that!

Research shows that those within the age group of 15-34 years constitute more than a third (i.e. about 35%) of the estimated population of about 50 million people.

However, during the 2021 local elections, a total of 175 206 18-19 year-olds registered and 124 905 of them voted on election day giving us a voter participation rate of 71 per cent. This is way above the average turnout of 46 per cent. Therefore, once registered young voters do participate in large numbers.

I am informed that voter turnout during the 2021 WITS SRC elections was at 25%.

You can and must change that! We are here to join hands with you so that we can, together, change that!

The primary aim of this campaign is to cultivate and instil a culture of electoral democracy and active citizenry among students in both the public and private institutions of higher learning, to enhance voter registration and voter participation in both SRC elections and in national, provincial and local government elections.

It is our firm belief that engaging students' views about democracy and elections through voter education based dialogue will enhance voter participation among this particular group of the electorate population. To ensure continuity, those who win during these debates will be invited to speak in our thought leadership webinars on electoral democracy.

In addition, we will be conducting targeted Civic and Democracy Education interventions on campus using face-to-face and multimedia platforms to reach out to the entire student population.

We therefore encourage all students to play an active role in this campaign and participate in the activities we have lined up for you during the March focus week of this campaign from today until 25 March 2022.

Lastly, this campaign will run until the end of September this year with each month's activation coinciding with national commemorative events across all our nine provinces.

Let us join elbows today – not hands because of COVID-19 protocols - and build our future.

Let's start now, today and build today, tomorrow and forever!

As the great Nelson Mandela, who was once your age, said: "It is in your hands".

I thank you.