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For Immediate Release



**Higher Education  
Transformation Network**

Non-Profit Organization (NPO) Reg No: 116-851

## **PRESS RELEASE: PARLIAMENTARY PORTFOLIO COMMITTEE HEARINGS ON HIGHER EDUCATION AMENDMENT BILL 36 OF 2015**

The Higher Education Transformation Network will be today submitting its oral representations to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Higher Education as part of its submission on the proposed Higher Education Amendment Bill 36 of 2015 amending the Higher Education Act 101 of 1997.

We support the promulgation of the Higher Education Amendment Bill 36 of 2015 due to:-

- a) **The need to regulate the financial accountability by institutions of higher learning**
- b) **The need for compliance with the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA)**
- c) **The need for compliance with state transformation policies and related legislation such as Employment Equity by the higher education sector**
- d) **The need for the attainment of National Development Plan (NDP) targets.**
- e) **The need to bring higher education statutes in line with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa**
- f) **The need for accountability by University Council and Vice-Chancellors**
- g) **The need to remove the hidden power of Universities SA**
- h) **The need to remove the passive / active resistance by Higher Education Managers**
- i) **Enforcement of compliance of the various institutional founding statutes with the Constitution of the Republic**
- j) **The need for PFMA compliant external audits by the Auditor-General as is the case with other public entities of the state**

The attainment of the Republic's NDP Vision 2030 goals and objectives. The HETN believes that state regulation of the governance of the higher education sector is critical, due to the underlying causes of the current slow pace of implementation of higher education transformation, namely, the current configuration of the statutory Council on Higher Education and its subcommittees which are over-represented by the same academics and members of Higher Education SA (HESA) / Universities SA who frustrate transformation at institutional level.

The Higher Education Transformation Network, believes that Universities SA and the Council on Higher Education (CHE) cannot alone fulfill the roles of player and referee within the higher education sector and must be strongly regulated by the State. We accordingly reject any unfounded calls for the "*protection of institutional autonomy*".

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The need for strong state regulation is necessitated by the negligible progress attained in reaching the targets set by the National Development Plan (NDP). This is critical indeed as the country's attainment of its NDP goals compel the higher education sector to transform.

Stronger regulation of the higher education sector is required to remove the unilateral disregard for national interest and imperatives by Vice-Chancellors and university Councils and to ensure that the higher education sector better serves the nation that establishes and funds universities.

At the current pace, the higher education sector is producing professors from the ranks of the disadvantaged, especially black female professors, at a rate that will see South Africa unable to attain its National Development Plan targets as stated in Vision 2030. This is due to amongst others a lack of transformation and dragging of feet by higher education managers.

The illegal privatization of state funding perpetrated by higher education institutions undermines the ethos of the Education White Paper 3 of 1997, the Constitution of the Republic, as well as the Public Finance Management Act (PFMA).

We reiterate that these billions of reserves held by universities pre-1994 are ill-gotten gains from policies, processes and practices pre- and during the apartheid state, which need to be declared and returned to the national fiscus to be utilised to co-fund the annual allocations of the state and secure the entry of poor students into the sector through amongst others the recapitalisation of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS).

We further support the legislative amendment to ensure that public tertiary institutions are audited by the Auditor-General, as is the case with other public entities of the state.

We believe that the statutory amendments contained in the Higher Education Amendment Bill 36 of 2015 are necessary and in the national interests of the Republic of South Africa to assist the country to attain its National Development Plan goals and objectives.

We commend and further call on Members of Parliament (MP) and the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande to resolutely forge ahead with the adoption of the Bill in its current form without any amendments. Ends.

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About the Higher Education Transformation Network (HETN):-

The Higher Education Transformation Network (HETN) is an independent network of alumni and graduates from various higher education and further educational institutions across South Africa committed to the process of transformation of education and training to increase equitable and meaningful access to education, skills and learning to eliminate of socio-economic disparities.