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For Immediate Release



**Higher Education  
Transformation Network**

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

## **PRESS RELEASE: MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION'S ANNOUNCEMENT ON FEES**

The Higher Education Transformation Network (HETN) hereby welcomes the announcement made by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, Dr Blade Nzimande with regards to the fee increments.

We commend government and the Minister of Higher Education for the immense role it has played in ensuring increased access to students from poor communities in the form of the establishment of x2 new higher education institutions in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape; an increase in higher education student enrolments of over 70% and a fully subsidized TVET College sector however free access to higher education remains a Constitutional obligation.

We support the call for the no-fee increments for South African children of the working class whose parents earn less than R600 000.00 per annum (*the so-called missing middle*). Whilst we support the above-mentioned policy position by the Minister of Higher Education and Training, we wish to emphasize that we believe that this should be a transitional measure applicable within the next 2 years as free quality higher education should be rolled out to all South African students irrespective of race class as dictated by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

Whilst the National Student Financial Aid Scheme was originally reserved for the poor. It is critical that the poor be ring-fenced from any fee increments and accordingly the fee increments must only affect the ranks of the affluent.

### **1. International Practices**

International practices indicate that it is not the sole responsibility of government alone to fund higher education. The responsibility to fund higher education is a shared social responsibility shared by government and the business sector.

We accordingly also call on the business sector to assist the state in funding higher education as it is business that also benefits from the immense investments made. In the past years, the state has invested billions of taxpayer funds in recapitalizing the NSFAS as well as funding new university infrastructure in poorer universities to facilitate increased access. These investments have not been fairly matched by the business sector.

Registered Address: 54 Erica Road Bloubergstrand, Table View, 7441  
Postal: Postnet Suite 162 Willows 0184  
Tel: (012) 771 2065  
Cell: 072 815 5033 / 076 687 4542  
Fax: 086 510 6630  
Email: [enquiries@hetn.org.za](mailto:enquiries@hetn.org.za)  
[www.hetn.org.za](http://www.hetn.org.za)

NPO Reg No: 116-851 Directors: I Tufvesson; M. Makhele; T. Molea, B. Lepota; O.Matshediso, K. Malele, R Ramasaka

## **2. Raising the Skills Development Levies (SDL)**

In lieu of the need for increased funding for the NSFAS, the Network hereby calls on government and all roleplayers at NEDLAC for the immediate amend the Skills Development Levies Act of 1998 and **increase in the skills development levy by 1%** which needs to be ring-fenced exclusively to recapitalize the NSFAS.

## **3. Utilization of Technologies to Increase Access to the Poor**

We call on all Vice-Chancellors and Council to immediately set a quota of students who will benefit from free access to higher education through the usage of Telematic technologies. We believe as the Network that several universities in South Africa including amongst others the University of Pretoria, Stellenbosch, NWU are in possession of Telematics technology which can allow lecturers to deliver free quality education to the poor from a remote setting. We are amazed that these technologies are not being utilized to be benefit the poor due to the fixation by Vice-Chancellor with setting artificial entry barriers to poor disadvantaged students in the form of their emphasis on fees.

## **4. Declaration of University Reserves back to National Treasury to Recapitalise NSFAS**

We again call on Universities SA and its member Vice-Chancellors to declare all their reserves and investments held by institutions of higher learning back to National Treasury so that these funds are utilised to recapitalise the NSFAS.

We reiterate that these billions of university reserves (surpluses and investment funds) held by amongst others universities of Cape Town (UCT), Johannesburg (UJ), Pretoria (Tukkies), Stellenbosch, Free State (UFS) and WITS in private investment accounts are ill-gotten gains from the racist historic subsidy formulae by the former apartheid state and need to be declared back to National Treasury and be utilised to co-fund the annual allocations of the state and entry of poor students into the sector through amongst others the recapitalisation of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS). The privatisation of state funding by Universities SA members must cease immediately.

## **5. All Employed Graduates to Pay their NSFAS Loans**

We further call on all graduates who have historically benefitted from NSFAS funding to settle and honour their NSFAS loan obligations to ensure the funding of future generations of students.

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For further information please contact:-

Dr Ingrid Tufvesson                      Chairperson of the Board  
Cell :    072 815 5033  
Tel:    (012) 771 2065  
Email:    [itufvesson@hetn.org.za](mailto:itufvesson@hetn.org.za); [justis1st@gmail.com](mailto:justis1st@gmail.com)

Mr Ramafala Ramatshosa:    Director: Media Liaison  
Cell :    082 316 2147  
Tel:    (012) 771 2065  
Email:    [ramafala@gmail.com](mailto:ramafala@gmail.com); [rramatshosa@hetn.org.za](mailto:rramatshosa@hetn.org.za)

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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.