DECLARATION

This summit recognises this extraordinary opportunity for a re-examination of our understanding of the post-apartheid South African university 15 years after the advent of our democracy; embraces the opportunity to reposition this sector in a reconfigured post-school education and training system to pursue key national development goals; commits ourselves to addressing the challenges raised in the Report of the Ministerial Committee on Transformation and Social Cohesion and the Elimination of Discrimination in Public Higher Education Institutions.

We re-affirm the fundamental principles of the White Paper on Higher Education adopted in 1997 after extensive and inclusive processes of consultation with the sector:

- Equity and redress
- Democratisation
- Development
- Quality
- Effectiveness and efficiency
- Academic freedom
- Institutional autonomy
- Public accountability

We recognise the challenges of:

- Sustaining responsive and engaged knowledge institutions which are fit for the purpose of transformation and development in South Africa and in particular to respond to regional social and economic needs and HRD
- Producing socially responsible graduates conscious of their role in contributing to the national development effort and social transformation
- Developing a well-organised, vibrant research and development system which integrates the research and training capacity of higher education with the needs of industry and of social reconstruction
- Deepening robust and inclusive democratic processes at system and institutional level
- Increasing access to and articulation within post-school education and training, particularly to the poor
- Developing a framework for a continuum of institutions differentiated in relation to their strengths and purposes and linked to regional/local economic networks; and facilitating portability of students, academics and knowledge across the sector
- Pressures of commodification and commercialisation in higher education since 1994 have privileged business efficiencies
- The many factors impacting on the quality of the academic project
- The poor conditions under which many students learn and live

And affirm:
- That academic freedom and institutional autonomy are necessary freedoms that enable our universities to effectively address the imperatives and developmental challenges of our society. At the same time we recognise that there are duties and responsibilities that inhere in these freedoms: the duties include our commitment to transform our universities so that they become more equitable, inclusive and just.
- Strong governance is needed for universities to be publicly accountable.

- The contribution of this sector to the broad system of education, and its specific contribution to strengthening basic education.
- Our commitment to ongoing and robust engagement.

WAY FORWARD: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a permanent Stakeholder Forum. The Department must lead a broad consultative process immediately after the summit to define the role and functions of this forum and a process for it to be established.
2. Convene an annual summit to review progress in the sector (the sector being accountable to itself). Annual summits should keep institutional progress in relation to the recommendations of the Soudien report on the agenda.
3. A working group should be urgently convened to take forward the framework for differentiation developed in the summit and develop recommendations in consultation with the sector.
4. Develop mechanisms to promote student-centeredness and caring universities.
5. Develop a charter on learning and teaching.
6. Seek a focused recapitalisation of HDIs.
7. Develop strategies to strengthen emphasis on post-graduate studies and research and address the engendering of a new generation of academics.
8. Revitalise the academic profession including the development of a coordinated plan to increase the number of younger researchers.
9. Ensure stronger intra-institutional capacity-building & knowledge sharing in order to foster inter-institutional sectoral solidarity and collaboration.
10. Ensure commitment to good corporate governance.
11. Address the decent work requirements or academics and support staff.
12. A national framework for development of student leadership.
13. There is a need to develop programmes aimed at improving opportunities for young African academics particularly women.
14. HEIs must contribute to the development of African languages as academic languages, understanding the role that language plays in development and education. This includes the development of African language-based post graduate outputs across disciplinary areas.
15. We need a curriculum oriented toward social relevance and which supports students to become socially engaged citizens and leaders.