



22 July 2014
Cape Town, South Africa

20 years of democracy in SA, 25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall - two countries in transition

Discussion to feature Justice Albie Sachs and German political activist Markus Meckel, on Thursday, 24 July 2014, at 17h45 for 18h00 in the LS3A Lecture Theatre, Leslie Social Sciences Building, Upper Campus

The Delegation of the European Union to South Africa, as part of its EU Inspiring Thinkers Series, along with the German Embassy in South Africa and the University of Cape Town, will on Thursday, 24 July 2014, jointly host a themed discussion entitled "20 years of democracy in South Africa – 25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall: two countries in transition".

Media who want to attend the discussion should **RSVP to Riana Geldenhuys at +27 21 650 4846, +27 82 460 5554 or riana.geldenhuys@uct.ac.za**.

Sharing the German experience will be **Mr Markus Meckel**, political activist, the last foreign minister of the German Democratic Republic and a former Member of the German Bundestag (Parliament) for the Social Democratic Party. Speaking on South Africa's transition will be **Justice Albie Sachs**, eminent political activist and former Constitutional Court Judge. Both speakers have been active at the very forefront of their respective countries' transformations.

Professor Anthony Butler, Head of the Department of Political Studies at UCT and well-known political commentator, will subsequently moderate a discussion on the two countries' transitions and the challenges these present. Dr Mamphela Ramphele, former South African politician who also served as Managing Director of the World Bank and Vice-Chancellor of UCT, will deliver introductory remarks at the start of the discussion.

Background information:

This is the second discussion in the EU Inspiring Thinkers Series, hosted jointly by the EU and UCT. The title of Thursday's EU Inspiring Thinkers discussion, "20 years of democracy in South Africa – 25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall: two countries in transition", is unambiguous: 2014 has a special significance for both South Africa and Germany as they commemorate and celebrate seminal moments in their own and in world history.

Both countries are today societies in transition – transitions that were set in motion by what could be described as the two most seismic events of the second half of the 20th century: the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Apartheid. While the timing of neither could be foreseen, many had argued that these two events were inevitable. What was not inevitable, however, was that both of these trajectory-altering developments would take place peacefully. And therein, possibly, lays their greatest significance and contribution to human history.

In each case, for a moment, the world stopped and people all around the globe held their breath.

Made possible by the end of the Cold War as well the respective countries' internal situation at the time, the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Apartheid triggered two remarkable transformative journeys for both Germany and South Africa. These have opened up new possibilities and perspectives for cooperation on a global scale.

ENDS

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