**PRESS RELEASE :**

SAIA inaugurates Amira Osman as its 70th President

**Inauguration takes place under theme of ‘What Does Transformation Look Like?’**

**6 February 2023:** The [South African Institute of Architects](http://www.saia.org.za) (SAIA) inaugurated **Amira Osman** as its 70th President at a hybrid event on Thursday 2 February. The high-profile event was attended by government, industry, academic and professional leadership.

Tshwane University of Technology Vice Chancellor **Professor Tinyiko Maluleke** presented keynote speaker **Judge Albie Sachs**, who commented on his previous experience as an adjudicator for the South African Institute of Architects (SAIA) Awards. He reflected how buildings that had social and spatial significance, and impacted on the lives of communities, needed to be acknowledged.

Judge Sachs spoke about his experience in the building of the Constitutional Court on the historical site of notorious Apartheid prisons and where diverse Johannesburg neighbourhoods meet. He explained how an international architectural competition saw the transformation of the site into a building and a space that resonated with the users and the community. He felt a sense of joy whenever he approached the site, explaining how he perceived that as a transformed architectural practice.

**Tokunbo Omisore**, International Union of Architects (UIA) Vice President Region V Trustee and Past President of the Africa Union of Architects, who joined via Zoom, drew parallels with the UIA World Architectural Congress held in Durban in 2014 and the upcoming UIA congress in Copenhagen in July 2023.

Omisore explained how Africa’s Great Green Wall, which promotes sustainable development and climate change mitigation, will feature in Copenhagen, exploring how the profession can contribute to regenerating the social ecological systems of the continent and making them more resilient in the face of climate change and degradation, all while supporting and promoting indigenous knowledge and traditional technologies.

“Our world is facing climatic challenges that are subjecting many to poverty. To survive and thrive, the architectural profession must think creatively and engage collectively in the Conference of Parties on Climate Change to address these challenges,” urged Omisore.

Osman is the South African Research Chair in Spatial Transformation (Positive Change in the Built Environment). The architectural profession has a critical role to play in the achievement of human settlements that are more equitable, beautiful, and functional, increasing opportunities and offering people a better chance at improving their lives and livelihoods, according to Osman’s SAIA Manifesto.

“Transformation is multi-dimensional,” she stated. “Transforming our profession is about how we teach, research, and practice, as well as the demographic profile of the architectural community. Every project and site level intervention has the potential to be transformational.” She invited the Department of Human Settlements to partner with the built environment professions to implement innovative pilot projects where experimentation is promoted. These are seen as critical as policy change.

Osman pointed out that the Department of Home Affairs identifies architecture as a scarce skill, citing **President Cyril Ramaphosa**’s statement in the National Assembly on 3 November 2022 that there is a lack of suitably qualified town planners to assist with urban planning. She questioned whether these are true and why there is a constant side-lining of the South African disciplines that can most assist in achieving spatial transformation, namely the spatial experts, town planners, and architects.

Osman complimented the Department of Human Settlements on the recent passing of new norms and standards for rental housing gazetted in January 2023. An architect was part of the team that helped in this important milestone, which should be a game changer in achieving quality housing environments “because design matters. At the heart of the policy is the pursuit of integrated housing environments that provide amenities for residents and seek to transform our cities.”

In keeping with the theme of the event, SAIA Vice-President Architect **Mokena Makeka** moderated a discussion about the importance and urgency of spatial transformation. Makeka said there is a need for a sustained dialogue to discuss the relationship between architecture and cities.

“All too often our profession is perceived as the arbiter of good taste when it comes to good buildings. We are seen as aesthetic purveyors that work in elitist spaces and are obsessed with details. We need to reclaim what architecture is, which is the creation of society and cities,” said Makeka. Participants in the discussion included outgoing SAIA President Architect **Ruben Reddy**, Professor Maluleke and TUT Senior Lecturer **Dr. Emmanuel Nkambule**.

The event concluded with the following SAIA Individual Awards:

1. Gold Medal for Architecture (2019) in Recognition of Outstanding Contribution to Architecture: **Carin Smuts** and the late **Rodney Choromanski**.
2. Gold Medal of Distinction (2019) in Recognition of Outstanding Contribution to Architecture through Distinguished Service to the Profession: **Professor Roger Fisher**.
3. Architectural Critics and Writers Award (2019) in Recognition of a Distinguished Contribution to Architectural Criticism and/or Writing: **Professor Ora Joubert** and **Professor Lindsay Bremner**.
4. Life Membership (2019) was conferred upon **Michael William Kidd Sutton** and **Abdool Aziz Ahmed Tayob**.
5. Honorary Membership (2019) was conferred upon **Adele Naude Santos**.

*The SAIA would like to extend its gratitude and appreciation to the following primary sponsors: SAFAL Steel, Interslab (Infinity), A.B.E (Saint Gobain) and* Tshwane University of Technology (*TUT). Secondary sponsors were Baker Baynes and Etex South Africa.*

**Pull quote**

“Transforming our profession is about how we teach, research, and practice, as well as the demographic profile of the architectural community.” – **Amira Osman**,President, SAIA

**Social media**

***Twitter***

Amira Osman was inaugurated as the 70th President of the South African Institute of Architects at a hybrid event on Thursday 2 February. The high-profile event was attended by government, industry, academic and professional leadership. #SAIA #WhatDoesTransformationLookLike

**You Tube :** Please click on the following link to access the event that was live streamed  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=llk5ivmlUz8>

***Ends***

**Notes to the editor**

To download hi-res images for this release, please visit <http://media.ngage.co.za> and click on the NGAGE link.

**About SAIA**

Reconstituted in 2015, the South African Institute of Architects (SAIA) is a voluntary association and natural successor to the Institute of South African Architects (ISAA), originally established in 1927 and renamed SAIA in 1996.

SAIA incorporates the nine existing regional institutes: SAIA incorporates the nine existing regional institutes: SAIA Border-Kei, CIfA a Region of SAIA, SAIA Eastern Cape, SAIA Free State, GIfA a Region of SAIA, SAIA Kwazulu-Natal, SAIA Limpopo, SAIA Mpumalanga and PIA a Region of SAIA.

The mission of the Institute is to act as the collective voice serving the interests of its members in pursuit of excellence and responsible design. It aims to uphold the dignity of the architectural profession and contribute meaningfully to the enhancement of society and the environment. The fundamental principles of equality and justice are implicit in our Constitution.

SAIA is a member of the Africa Union of Architects (AUA), the Commonwealth Association of Architects (CAA), the International Union of Architects (UIA), the International Commission on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), and the International Committee Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites, and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement (DOCOMOMO).

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