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**Media Statement**

**22 August 2007**

**UCT opens its new state-of-the-art women's residence in honour of the UCT Chancellor  
Mrs. Graça Machel**

The University of Cape Town's new women's residence – the Graça Machel Hall, was officially opened today by the UCT Chancellor Mrs. Graça Machel, the Chairman of the UCT Council and the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Professor Njabulo S. Ndebele.

The new residence will even the balance of accommodation offered to students. Some 10 000 of UCT's 21 900 students live in residences on the campus. Fifty three percent of these are in men's residences. The new facility will bring the figure to just over 54% in favour of women students.

The new R87-million, 382-bed women's residence inconspicuously conforms to the gradient and surrounding environment and has three storeys. The building will later include a new gymnasium with cross-training facilities next to the existing swimming pool. The designers have created three internal courtyards where students can safely mingle and relax. Rooms have been designed in clusters of eight, creating communities within communities, each with a common room.

The specifications, design and completion were vetted by a user group made up of wardens, residence committees, women students and the Disability Unit. Disabled students are being accommodated in appropriately designed rooms on the ground floor; each room is markedly larger than standard units. The residence boasts a trendy 400 seat dining hall, energy saving solar water heaters, and a modern and vibrant color scheme.

Historically, the first official women’s residence – Fuller Hall, was opened in 1923 following campaigning by UCT alumnus and University Council Member, Minnie Barnard-Fuller. Fuller Hall was one of the first buildings to be erected on the Groote Schuur site on Upper Campus and is now a national monument.

In his address, Professor Ndebele said “the Graça Machel Hall will no doubt become the ‘accommodation of choice’. We are very excited about this new residence”.

Professor Ndebele mentioned the significance of this opening as another step forward in UCT’s progress towards achieving gender equity. He encouraged the women residents to follow the example of Mrs. Machel as a leader.

He said UCT has been home to women who have broken the boundaries to become leaders in their time. “Advancing women in leadership is an integral part of the university’s transformation objectives, and over the years UCT has strived to promote women students and staff in all aspects of their academic and professional development. It is always with great pride when we witness the recognition they receive nationally and internationally, and the impact that they have on society, in academia, in business, in the arts and beyond.”

Mrs. Machel said she accepted the recognition as tribute to rural girls in Africa who don’t have access to education. She said the privilege of education that the women student residents have, brings with it the responsibility to plough back until every child can access education as a right and not a privilege.

**END.**

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