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**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Western and African philosophies combined**

It is rare for any businessman to turn to philosophy for ideas on innovation and empowerment, but that is what Dr Reuel Khoza has done in a groundbreaking new book, *Attuned Leadership*, in which he combines Aristotle and African humanism to produce an extraordinary formulation of leadership principles.

*Attuned Leadership* is a big book of more than 500 pages, now appearing on the business shelves in bookstores. It may be destined to for classic status as it easily readable but probes the deepest foundations of corporate thinking. In a series of chapters ranging over metaphysics, governance, citizenship and African and global politics, Khoza formulates a new vision of a humanised, compassionate version of capitalism for the modern world.

"It is our human right to share in the pool of resources assembled by business organisations, and equally, it is our duty to contribute to the sustainability of those organisations," writes Khoza. "We are people with needs ranging from basic food and security to self-actualisation through work and play. Governance at any level in society is a co-operative undertaking."

Khoza reaches the conclusion that corporate citizenship implies a commitment to social justice. No leader in business can adopt the amoral approach that the purpose of business is merely to make maximum profit for its shareholders, for while profit is vital, people and planet must also benefit.

Rules of governance, he believes, should be expressed in terms of human rights. The empowerment of individuals to achieve what is best in them is not something done for the good of the business only, but for the good of the community. From empowerment comes creativity and the innovation that keeps businesses alive in tough market conditions.

The author draws on a wide range of classical Western philosophers, from Aristotle to Immanuel Kant. He notes that he is a "man of two worlds" and is comfortable combining African and Western ideas where these contribute to the enrichment of communities through individual freedom.

Quoting Aristotle, Khoza asserts that "public virtue" is the highest goal of leaders and that they must express their moral role through practical wisdom.

"Paraphrased in modern idiom, Aristotle is saying that leaders must acquire through practice, certain deliberative, emotional, and social skills that enable them to respond sensibly to different situations."

Kant's moral rule that whatever one applies to oneself should also apply to others - the "categorical imperative" that we cannot have different, selfish standards for ourselves - is invoked by Khoza as a parallel to African humanism.

"In metaphysical terms, Ubuntu is first and foremost a statement of being – the 'I am' in all of us. It declares that each of us, in our separate lives, draws existence from the collective and we are only persons through other persons," says Khoza in a chapter laying out his African philosophical foundations.

But Attuned Leadership does not go along with all Western philosophers, especially those who stress the primacy of the individual above all else. Khoza's strongest criticism is directed at Rene Descartes, the 17th century skeptic who asserted "I think, therefore I am".

"Ubuntu posits a collective existence; the Cartesian world-view rests on individual identity," writes Khoza. "The contrast is striking.

"Significantly, while no-one knows who coined the term Ubuntu – a fact that in itself signifies its deep communal roots – it was a single individual, on a known date, who broached the idea that thoughts in a person's mind prove that person's existence.

"The person may know him- or herself only by means of conscious thought. This is a far cry from reflecting that one human life is the product of all other human lives. In African humanist terms, one's existence does not depend on what one thinks

in the lone citadel of the mind, but on social ties, common values and ways-of-seeing, and empathy with others."

In contemporary terms, Khoza's approach is most visibly influenced by stakeholder capitalism.

"We are party to the human compact that asserts our right to be recognised as stakeholders, while organisations have a responsibility to acknowledge us and treat us fairly as fellow participants in human affairs. With this orientation, rules and standards make ethical sense.

"Governance ... regulates the distribution of power, the exercise of transparency, stakes of ownership, accountability to stakeholders, routines of best practice that can be objectively appraised and revised, and methods of investigation and documentation. It is a cradle-to-grave rulebook for organisations that care about people. And we should all help to write the rulebook."

Attuned leadership is a tour de force of the type of practical thinking that the author admires. Though the book focuses on principles for business, it applies the concept of responsible and responsive leadership to the politics of Africa, drawing comparisons with "misleadership" in many states.

Khoza himself is a Johannesburg businessman with a degree in psychology, a doctorate in engineering, and plenty of experience on company boards. He started life as a herdboyc looking after the family cattle in Bushbuckridge near the Kruger Park. He is now President of the Institute of Directors in South Africa, Chairman of Nedbank, and a noted author of several books linking African humanism to concepts of business accountability and social responsibility.

His previous books include *The Power of Governance* (2005), *Let Africa Lead* (2006) and *The African of my Dreams* (date?), all of which make the connection between business, statecraft, and the moral authority of true leaders. Khoza is a well known speaker on the public circuit where he champions ethical best practice as the primary responsibility of leadership.

- *Attuned Leadership: African Humanism as Compass*, 526 pages hardcover, is published by Penguin South Africa and available in bookstores. **ends**