

---

## PRESIDENT OF CONVOCATION MEDAL

---

The President of Convocation Medal is awarded annually to an alumnus or alumna who has made a significant contribution to the common good.

### **SOPHIA KISTING-CAIRNCROSS**

Sophia Kisting-Cairncross is the Executive Director of the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH), South Africa since 2014. She is an Occupational Medicine Specialist with extensive workplace experience in Occupational and Environmental Health and Safety (OEHS) as well as preventive, promotive and compensation health services. She returned to South Africa in 2012 after nearly 7 years in the United Nations at the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva. She was leading the ILO's Global Programme on HIV/AIDS and the World of Work and was, at the same time, the ILO/UNAIDS Global Coordinator for HIV/AIDS in workplaces. At the ILO she played the lead scientific and lead technical role in the development of a human rights protective international labour standard on HIV/AIDS which has been used in many countries to protect the human rights of workers living with HIV/AIDS. She had the significant opportunity to present the central human rights protective clauses of this labour standard "ILO Recommendation 200 on HIV and AIDS and World of Work" to the United Nations General Assembly High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS in 2011.

Dr Kisting-Cairncross has worked for over 20 years in rural and urban public health centres including 5 years in the Soweto Community Health Centres (SCHC's) and Chris Hani Baragwaneth Hospital, 8 years in Zimbabwe and 3 years in Namibia. She coordinated the WHO/ILO Joint Effort on Occupational Health and Safety in Africa for nearly 3 years with support from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) in the USA. She worked for 12 years at the University of Cape Town, mainly in the School of Public Health in OEHS research and extensive service delivery, including a major role in the running of the Workers Clinic of the Industrial Health Resource Group.

Prior to her appointment to the ILO in 2005, Dr Kisting-Cairncross worked systematically with Government Departments in South Africa's post-apartheid constitutional democracy. This include serving on the Compensation Board of the Department of Labour; she played a catalytic role in the development and launch of the South African partnership of the WHO/ILO Global Programme for the Elimination of Silicosis; she did the background research that informed the Code of Good Practice for Pregnant and Breastfeeding Women under the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA); she was the medical advisor of the Parliamentary Committee that coordinated the ground-breaking Parliamentary Asbestos Summit in 1998 with extensive worker and community participation. The outcomes contributed to the discontinuation of the mining and use of asbestos because of its serious adverse health effects, especially lung cancer incurable mesothelioma.

Dr Kisting-Cairncross has particular interests in working with government departments, employers and workers to address concerns of workers with disabilities and workers who are vulnerable; finding positive solutions for workplace gender concerns; support the outcomes of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention ratified in 2012 by South Africa; the fundamental need to support greater income equity; addressing social justice concerns including prevention and compensation for work-related HIV and TB; greater tertiary education opportunities in OEHS for young South Africans; the protection of individual human rights at work and helping to nurture a culture of greater prevention through workplaces with a pro-poor emphasis.

In 2003, the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health in the USA recognized her as one of ten influential women in OHS internationally.