

Statement by the Minister of Arts and Culture, Paul Mashatile, on the occasion of the launch of the Nelson Mandela Digital Archives Project

27 March 2012

Programme Director, Representatives of the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory, Representatives of Google, Members of the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Department of Arts and Culture supports the Nelson Mandela Digital Archives Project, which is a partnership between the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory and Google.

Our support for this project is informed by our understanding that as we advance our programme of nation-building and promoting social cohesion, it is important that we continue to preserve our cultural heritage and in particular our liberation heritage.

At all times we must reaffirm our liberation heritage as an integral part of our country's collective memory and cultural heritage.

Equally it is important that we continue to celebrate and draw lessons from the lives of those who shaped our country's history and contributed to the freedom and democracy that we today enjoy.

These are men and women whose love for their country and its people inspired them to be of selfless service to all of humanity.

We in South Africa are proud that we are able to count among these brave men and women, former President Nelson Mandela; one of the founding fathers of our democratic nation and a symbol of hope to all those striving for a better and more humane world.

We are therefore encouraged that through this project documents about the life and times of former President Nelson Mandela will be accessible to as many people as possible.

Through this project we are sharing former President Nelson Mandela's proud legacy of selfless and dedicated service to humanity.

We are spreading his message of love for one another, of reconciliation, of equality, freedom, democracy and dignity for all.

This is the message that is a defining character of former President Mandela and his generation of freedom fighters.

We are also encouraged that this project will be used to strengthen ongoing efforts to promote dialogue and social justice.

We take this opportunity to once again send our best wishes all those responsible for the success of this project.

You have our support.

As the custodians of our country's national archives, the Department of Arts and Culture will continue to draw lessons from initiatives such as the Nelson Mandela digital archives project as we finalize our policy on the digitization of the national archives.

The process of digitization of the national archives will be undertaken with a view to increase their accessibility.

This process will also ensure that current and future generations draw lessons from our history and understand fully where we come from as a nation.

As we implement these and other initiatives we will do so as part of our ongoing efforts to promote national healing, national dialogue, nation building, social cohesion and an inclusive citizenship.

Once more well done to all those who responsible for the Nelson Mandela Digital Archives Project.

May this project achieve its objectives.

Thank you.