



Address by President Jacob Zuma at the official opening of the Nelson Mandela Center of Memory, Johannesburg

18 November 2013

Thank you for inviting us to share this special occasion, the official opening of the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory.

Programme Director

Chairperson of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Professor Njabulo Ndebele

Chief Executive of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, Mr Sello Hatang

Chairperson of the Nelson Mandela Foundation Resource Mobilisation Committee, Mr Tokyo Sexwale

Esteemed ANC veteran Ahmed Kathrada and other Trustees of the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory

Ms Graca Machel and other esteemed members of the Mandela family

ANC veterans

Captains and leaders of industry present

Esteemed guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Thank you for inviting us to share this special occasion, the official opening of the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory.

Housed at this Centre are some of the most important heritage resources that chronicle the life and times of the founding father of our democratic nation and our icon, Tata Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela.

These resources are an integral part of our nation's heritage, in particular our liberation heritage. They are our nation's treasures and they need to be preserved.

We take this opportunity to thank the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory for the excellent work they are doing in preserving part of our nation's heritage.

Through your work, you are making a major contribution towards integrating our liberation heritage into our nation's

The resources housed at this Centre form an integral part of defining where we come from as a nation.

They also help in articulating the kind of society we seek to build; a national democratic society that is united, non racial, non sexist, democratic and prosperous.

They tell an important part of the South African story; a story of a people that have overcome adversity; many years of division and conflict and have today joined hands in building a shared and prosperous future.

These resources are also critical in stimulating dialogue, both in our country and in the world so that as a people, as humanity, we remember our past and together strive towards peaceful co-existence

In particular, this dialogue must assist us in our pursuit for better South Africa, a better Africa and a better world.

As the South African government we support fully the work of the Nelson Mandela Center of Memory to preserve the proud legacy of President Madiba for current and future generations.

We also identify fully with your stated objective of contributing to a society that remembers its past, listens to all its voices and pursues social justice in order to promote peace, human rights and democracy.

Equally, and as you know, we remain fully supportive of Nelson Mandela Day, an initiative which the Centre helps in coordinating. Our primary goal in this regard is to inspire all South Africans to make everyday a Mandela Day.

Our support for the work done by the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory is informed by our understanding that South Africans and indeed the rest of humanity has a lot to learn from Tata Madiba life.

It is a life of selflessness and utmost dedication to the freedom, democracy, equality and dignity for all.

It is in Tata Madiba that the humanist values of Ubuntu continue to find expression, the values that teach us that I am because you are, motho, kemotho, kabatho.

It was Tata Madiba who showed us the importance of reconciliation and reaching out to one another.

It is from him and his generation that we were reminded once more that; what unites us far outweighs that which divides us; that humanity is one and that our destiny is linked.

It was also Tata Madiba who instilled in us the values of humility, hard work, respect for one another, honesty, integrity as well as equality and dignity for all.

These are the values that continue to guide us as we build the new South Africa nation, united in its diversity.

Indeed it is these values that drive our programme of nation building, promoting social cohesion, reconciliation and national healing.

As South Africans we are proud to be the children of Tata Nelson Mandela, and to share his proud legacy with the rest of the world.

Up to this day Tata Madiba continues to inspire all of us and remains a symbol of hope and resilience to all those striving for a better and more humane world.

As the South African government we will continue to honour Tata Madiba and his generation of leaders for the massive contribution they made to our liberation.

Part of the work we are doing to honour our icon is that, in December we will unveil Tata Madiba's statue at the Union Buildings.

This will be done as part of marking National Reconciliation Day, which this year also marks the centenary of the seat of government, the Union Buildings in Pretoria.

We are doing this as part of our ongoing work to craft a new and inclusive narrative for our country and to build new symbols and monuments that reflect the democratic values we now espouse as a nation.

As we know, for many years, the Union Buildings stood as a symbol of white domination and the exclusion of the majority.

Today, as the seat of the democratic government, it stands as a proud symbol of a people united in diversity.

By mounting Tata Madiba's statue at the Union Buildings we are cementing the Union Building's place among those symbols that reflect the kind of inclusive society we seek to build.

Programme Director, we are happy to reaffirm that government, through the Department of Arts and Culture, will support the Nelson Mandela Digital Archives Project, which is a partnership between the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory and Google.

This project will further strengthen efforts to preserve Tata Madiba's legacy and make available information about this icon easily to the rest of the world.

As part of the South Africa- French Cultural Seasons, currently being implemented in more than one hundred cities in France, the South African government is presenting a visual arts exhibition in honour of Tata Madiba at the Paris City Hall, titled Nelson Mandela; Character, Comrade, Leader, Prisoner, Negotiator, Statesman.

The exhibition continues to attract record attendances, proving once more that Tata Madiba is a global icon.

Last month a similar exhibition premiered at the Howard University in Washington DC, where in 1995 Tata Madiba was awarded an honorary doctorate.

Once again we are told that this exhibition is drawing large crowds.

Esteemed Guests we are doing all of these things as part of sharing Tata Madiba's proud legacy with the rest of the world.

We are also doing these things as a way of thanking the peoples of the world for standing with us in the fight against apartheid.

This is particularly important since next year we will celebrate our twentieth anniversary of freedom and democracy.

In many ways, these will be celebrations by a free people and indeed celebrations of Tata Madiba and his generation of freedom fighters for their contribution in building a better South Africa, a better Africa and a better world.

We take this opportunity, once more, to wish Tata Madiba well as he recovers from home.

We hope South Africans and indeed the peoples of the world will continue to keep him in their thoughts and prayers.

We wish the Nelson Mandela Center of Memory well in all its endeavours.

Let us continue to work together to defend and deepen the proud legacy of Tata Madiba.

I thank you.