

REMARKS BY GAUTENG PREMIER, DAVID MAKHURA, ON THE OCCASION OF OPENING OF THE MEMORIES OF THE STRUGGLE –AUSTRALIANS AGAINST APARTHEID MULTIMEDIA EXHIBITION. CONSTITUTION HILL, JOHANNESBURG.

2 November 2017

His Excellency, the Australian High Commissioner to South Africa, Mr. Adam McCarthy;

MEC for Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation in Gauteng, MEC Faith Mazibuko;

Justice Albie Sachs and Justice Edwin Cameron;

Ambassador Eddie Funde;

CEO of Constitution Hill, Ms Dawn Roberts;

Our friends and comrades in the Australian Anti-Apartheid Movement - Anthony Abrahams, Meredith Burgmann and Verity Burgman, Ken Davis and Frances Letters and

Jane Singleton the former Chair of the Australian National ANC Support Committee all of whom are here with us this evening

The Exhibition Curator, Mr Angus Leendertz

Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Ladies and Gentlemen

Comrades and Friends:

Good evening!

Welcome to the official opening of the Memories of the Struggle – Australians Against Apartheid Multimedia Exhibition.

High Commissioner McCarthy, I am glad that this day has come. The Exhibition has finally arrived. Our Australian friends and comrades are here.

I want to start by conveying our deepest gratitude to the Anti-Apartheid Movement in Australia for the support, friendship and solidarity during the struggle against apartheid - Australians Against Apartheid. Thank you, thank you and thank you!

It is fitting that this exhibition here at the Constitution Hill, a sacred space in the liberation struggle which marked the triumph of good over evil; a tribute to the triumph of the human spirit.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the Australasian South Africa Alliance, the Australian High Commission, Brand SA and Constitution Hill for partnering together to make it possible for this important work to be once again exhibited in South Africa. The Exhibition tells a story that is worth telling; a story of sacrifice and selfless service to the cause of freedom and democracy by progressive-minded internationalists who declared apartheid a heresy and a crime against humanity.

Opening this exhibition in a year that marks the Centenary of Oliver Tambo is good enough. Oliver Tambo was the foremost spokesperson of the people of South Africa and Ambassador par excellence of our liberation struggle. We owe it to O.R Tambo that the people of the world in general and Australians in particular supported the liberation struggle in our country. We must continue to build on these historic bonds of friendship and solidarity between our peoples.

Just last week, we had an Italian delegation that spent the entire week in Gauteng to celebrate the friendship between Italy and South Africa started by Oliver Tambo and Giuseppe Soncini in 1977.

I am glad that we are this evening joined by Ambassador Eddie Funde who was the Chief Rep of the ANC's Australasia and Pacific Mission from 1983 to 1991. Once again welcome Ambassador Funde. Ambassador Funde was Oliver Tambo's voice and a loyal servant of the people of South Africa in Australia.

The anti-apartheid movement was the biggest solidarity movement in the world. Our struggle was the single biggest struggle that united millions of people across the globe.

I extend a special welcome to the friends of the people of South Africa, Australians Against Apartheid. This is your home. We also look forward to working with all of you as we cement further our mutually beneficial relations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the exhibition we are opening this evening will go a long way in enhancing our understanding of the South African struggle for national liberation as it was fought outside the borders of our country. In many ways the exhibition is a celebration of activism and human solidarity. It celebrates the extra-ordinary role that people of Australia, outside and inside Australia, played in the global anti-apartheid movement.

It helps us rekindle the deep historic bonds of friendship and solidarity we share with the people of Australia. It reminds us that Australians from all walks of life - sports men and women, political and government leaders, church leaders, as well as ordinary men and women not only embraced our struggle, but also they took an active part in it. As I said they made our struggle their own. They too made sacrifices. Therefore with the attainment of freedom in 1994 their dreams became a reality. Their efforts and sacrifices paid off. Our freedom became their reward.

It is exhibitions such as these that remind us, constantly that the victory over apartheid was a product of immense sacrifices and deep solidarity by men and women of goodwill in our country and in many parts of the world. Victory over apartheid therefore was, as former President Nelson Mandela put it, victory for peace, for justice and for human dignity.

President Madiba had this to say with specific reference to the role of the Australian people in our struggle for national liberation; *“During those bleak decades on Robben Island and later in Pollsmoor Prison, my companions and I would occasionally glean news of anti-apartheid activities being carried out overseas. Such news brought us comfort and hope. Australians were notable for their participation in the anti-apartheid movement. They gained a reputation in the 1960s and 1970s for their demonstrations against visiting sports teams and individual players, for the moral and financial aid they gave our cause and for hosting education tours for visiting speakers. Later, Australians won recognition for their diplomatic efforts...*

He goes on further to say: *“I met many Australian politicians and journalists. But it was not until I visited Australia in 1990 that I grasped fully the extent of the commitment of the Australian people to our struggle for democracy. When I stood on the steps of the Sydney Opera House and witnessed the thousands upon thousands of people who had come to greet me, I was profoundly moved by this demonstration of support for a democratic and no racial South Africa.”*

Ladies and Gentlemen such is the appreciation we all have for the overwhelming support our cause received throughout the world, including in Australia. As we forge ahead along the path of building our country, we hope we can still rely on the support of our friends from the anti-apartheid movement.

I was supposed to have visited Australia earlier this year but had to change plans due to the natural disasters caused by the typhoons. But the Gauteng delegation led by MECs of Transport and Community Safety visited Australia and interacted with industry leaders in the mining, manufacturing and financial services sectors. These are some of the sectors that we, in Gauteng have identified as strategic to our own economy; sectors that we will continue to support and privilege and sectors that we will seek cooperation on with leading economies in the world that are compatible with our economy, such as the Australian economy. It was also agreed that as the Gauteng Provincial Government we will support the Melbourne Mining Chamber in hosting their Mining Conference here in Gauteng next year.

Discussions were also held with a view to strengthening cooperation in efforts towards promoting social cohesion and nation building, including through the use of sport. We know for instance that Australian football already has a presence in Gauteng. It is our intention to build on this presence as part of strengthening people to people contact between our two countries. All of these discussions form part of the ongoing work we must continue to do to strengthen our deep and historic bonds of friendship and solidarity that date back to the days of the South African struggle for national liberation – a struggle that the people of Australia adopted as their own.

On our part as leadership in this country, we will do everything necessary to ensure that your sacrifices were not in vain. We will uphold the values that are dear to you; values that led you to join us in the trenches for the defeat of oppression and exclusion; values of democracy, freedom, equality, justice and prosperity for all. We will continue to listen to your wise counsel. We will always hold you in the highest regard. You will always be our guiding light.

I look forward to greater cooperation between our two countries. I wish this Exhibition all the success.

Thank you.