

MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF ARTS AND CULTURE, PAUL MASHATILE, AT THE LAUNCH OF HERITAGE MONTH FOR THE YEAR 2011, BISHO EASTERN CAPE.

06 September 2011

Programme Director

The MEC for Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture in the Eastern Cape, MEC Xoliswa Tom

The MEC for the Roads and Public Works, MEC Thandiswa Marawu

The Chief Executive Officer of the National Heritage Council, Advocate Sonwabile Mancotywa

Mayors and Councillors here present

Members of the Media

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We have met here today to launch the 2011 Heritage Month programme.

The theme for this year's Heritage Month celebrations is: ***"Liberation Heritage in Honour of Heroes and Heroines of the Liberation Struggle"***.

Guided by this theme, we call on all South Africans to take time to honour the heroes and heroines of our liberation struggle.

These are men and women many of whom paid the ultimate prize for us to enjoy the freedom and democracy that we today enjoy.

We have chosen to launch this year's Heritage Month celebrations in the Eastern Cape because this province has a rich liberation heritage.

It was in this province that the frontier wars were fought.

It was also in this province that the historic Pondo Revolt took place.

This province is the birth place of struggle icons such as Oliver Tambo, Govan Mbeki, Walter Sisulu, former President Nelson Mandela, Steve Biko, Robert Sobukwe, Victoria Mxenge, Donald Woods, Mama Albertina Sisulu and many others who led the struggle for liberation in our country.

This year's Heritage Month theme speaks of the need to defend and deepen the proud legacy of our liberation struggle icons.

It also speaks of the need to preserve and tell the stories of all those sites that played a significant part in our struggle for liberation.

As we launch Heritage Month we do so fully aware that this is the year of job creation in our country.

It is our view that heritage has an important contribution to make towards the national effort to create more jobs.

Indeed through heritage we can stimulate local economic development and contribute towards building better and sustainable communities.

When I and my delegation arrived in the Eastern Cape yesterday, we visited Nkantolo, the birth place of O.R Tambo, the commemorative site of the Pondo Revolt in Ngquza and former President Nelson Mandela's birthplace at Mvezo.

This morning, we have already been to the grave site of Mama Victoria Mxenge, the Steve Biko Garden of Remembrance and later today we will visit the grave site of the Duncan Village massacre.

I am pleased to announced that in each of these sites, we will be establishing task teams made up of government and civil society to ensure that the rich heritage found in these sites is not only preserved but also is used for the economic empowerment of our communities.

I am also delighted to announce that R 24.8 million has be budgeted for the establishment of an interpretative centre at the Garden of Remembrance in Nkantolo, a statue and exhibitions in honour of O.R. Tambo.

We will also upgrade the house at which O. R Tambo was born.

A total of R15 million has been set aside for further development of the Pondo Revolt Commemorative Site.

The Holy Cross Church in Ngquza, where O. R Tambo was a member, will be declared a heritage site.

In Mvezo we are partnering with the Ministry of Tourism on a project aimed at boosting heritage tourism to that area.

As we implement these initiatives we will work together and coordinate our efforts with other departments.

Our approach is that; the time for talking has come and gone. Now is the time to deliver tangible results.

We welcome initiatives currently underway in this province to use heritage to build better and sustainable communities.

These include the Bisho revitalization project that the MEC for Transport, Roads and Public Works will elaborate on.

We urge other provinces to follow this example.

Programme Director, in order for us to reach the goals we have set for ourselves, we must form strong partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector.

Through the National Liberation Heritage Route project, we will ensure that we coordinate the work of all government departments that have a role to play in developing all the sites that form part of the liberation heritage route.

Our ultimate goal is to ensure that these sites are sustainable and that they bring meaningful change in communities.

Communities also have a role to ensure that these sites are respected, preserved and protected for current an future generations.

It is for this reason that we urge communities to clean grave sites of our struggle heroes and heroines every year on the 23rd of September, the day before national heritage day.

In conclusion, I wish to announce that this year's national heritage day celebrations will be held in Mpumalanga on the 24th of September 2011.

Provinces will also be announcing details of their Heritage Month celebrations.

Thank you.