

Keynote address by the Minister of Arts and Culture, Paul Mashatile, on the occasion of the Liberation Heritage Route Gauteng Consultative Summit 31 March 2011

Programme Director

MEC for Sports, Arts, Culture and Recreation in Gauteng; MEC Lebogang Maile

Members of Parliament and Members of the Provincial Legislature

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

Official from the national and provincial governments

Representatives of local government

Representatives of the various organizations within the Heritage sector

Representatives of political parties

Veterans of our struggle, present here today

Delegates to this Summit

Honoured guests

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today marks an important milestone in our ongoing endeavor to ensure that the story of our liberation struggle is told in full, in our own words and that it is preserved for future generations.

The Gauteng Summit on the Liberation Heritage Route, will strengthen efforts to build a national consensus on the need for a Liberation Heritage Route and the sites that must form part of this Route.

This Summit will also assist us to develop a common understanding on how the Liberation Heritage Route will contribute towards promoting national healing, social cohesion, reconciliation and dialogue.

We must therefore emerge out of this Summit, with a clear plan on how stakeholders in Gauteng will contribute to the overall success of this project.

This we say because while the National Heritage Council has set the agenda around the development of the Liberation Heritage Route, critical drivers of this project are provinces and municipalities.

This Summit must also assist us to mobilize the various communities in our country; rural and urban, black and white, men and women, young and old to participate in this project by telling their own stories and reflecting on their experience of the liberation struggle.

We also look up to this Summit to deliberate on how the Liberation Heritage Route will benefit local communities, taking advantage of the linkages that exist between heritage and tourism.

In the same vein, this Summit must generate ideas on the partnerships that can be formed with communities and the private sector; to mobilize resources especially for long term infrastructural investments in this project.

Programme Director; the Liberation Heritage Route will serve as a monument, honouring the many sacrifices and struggles by generations of freedom fighters both in our country and outside our country.

It will pay tribute to all freedom fighters, irrespective of their ideological affiliation and will reflect our nation's appreciation of the role played by all liberation movements.

The Liberation Heritage Route will encourage current and future generations to treasure their freedom and to remember that it came at an enormous cost to our country, the African Continent and beyond.

By developing this Route we are reaffirming that our liberation was a product of a titanic struggle that brought together ordinary men and women and drew overwhelming support from the peoples of Africa and the world.

In this regard, we are encouraged by the interest shown by the international community to hear the story of our liberation struggle.

To us this confirms, once more, that our story of liberation is a story of universal significance.

We are particularly encouraged that the Liberation Heritage Route has the support of leaders within the SADC region and in the African Continent.

This support is critical since it is an acknowledgement of the Liberation Heritage Route's contribution towards efforts to build a better and more humane Africa and the World, using our common heritage.

We note with appreciation that the Liberation Heritage Route has been included in UNESCO's tentative list of World Heritage Sites.

This further highlights the project's importance both locally and internationally.

Programme Director, in the implementation of this massive project, we must ensure proper consultation, co-ordination and planning across all spheres of government.

This is because all spheres of government have a role to play in the success of this project.

In this regard, we are encouraged by the efforts of the National Heritage Council to involve relevant national departments, provinces and municipalities in the conceptualization and implementation of this project.

We expect this Summit to further strengthen these efforts.

We must also continue to work with other countries, especially our neighboring countries in the identification, documentation and management of liberation heritage sites located outside our country.

We are pleased to report that we have begun discussions with countries such as Botswana, Mozambique and Tanzania aimed at working together to identify, document and manage liberation heritage sites in these countries.

Congratulations to all those who have made this Summit possible.

I wish you success in your deliberations and we look forward to the outcome of this Summit.

Thank you.