

## **Response by the NHC CEO to the Speech of the Minister of Arts and Culture, Paul Mashatile at the Gauteng Liberation Summit - 31 March 2011**

By Advocate Sonwabile Mancotywa

Hon Minister; Hon MEC;

Ambassadors and High Commissioners;

Distinguished Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Programme Director,

The Gauteng Liberation Heritage Route Summit has been convened to extend ownership and solicit the views of fellow South Africans on the best strategies for the management of the legacy of the liberation struggle. We appreciate the guidance of the political leadership who have helped in demonstrating high levels of prioritization of this national memory project. Across the length and breadth of the country the Liberation Heritage Route is attaining formal acceptance. The custodians of this memory, the people, are narrating amazing stories on how the liberation struggle unfolded. Through this project they are suggesting that visible symbols should be erected for the accurate and authentic interpretation of popular history. The inputs of our leaders have laid a solid foundation for us to continue with this mobilizational phase for this liberation heritage route.

The South African experience, like many struggles in Africa, was unique. It is important that we guard against collective amnesia. As the NHC we express unwavering commitment to the Liberation Heritage Route. This is a project which seeks to reinforce a national pattern of remembering which invokes the essence of our patriotism. It is about the development and organization of sites nationally and the trans-national linkages with other significant spaces in other countries.

The concept of a Liberation Heritage Route has its origins in the struggle history of the South African people. Heritage can be affirmative in the sense that it records and portrays that which seeks to resuscitate and take pride in. It can also refer to that which people regard as marking the lowest ebb of their experience to be remembered expressly to alert future generations to the possibilities of retrogressive recurrence. Reconciliation and nation building can be predicated on the mutual understanding between generations as perpetrators and victims, with the perpetrators accepting responsibility for the past and apologising, and the victims accepting the apology and providing a basis for building a hatred-free new order.

The significance of the liberation experience must be transmitted to future generations and the reconstruction of this national memory must stand the test of time

The preservation of this type of national memory is anchored on the values of a democratic society. The main challenge facing the National Heritage Council, the Department of Arts and Culture and strategic partners is how to put together a narrative based on events that happened over a long period of time. This is a project that is politically rooted on the unique South African experience. Many sites of conflict such as Sharpeville and other battlegrounds have already been mainstreamed in the Gauteng Province. From Rivonia to the dialectical between the emergence of the civic movement and the trade union movement to joint programmes of progressive forces during the total onslaught campaign of the apartheid regime, the heroic struggles of our people will be recorded. The multi-class leadership of the liberation movement which entrenched democratic traditions in our communities and the engendered spaces which account for the struggles of women, will be captured as part of the milestones of the national liberation struggle. All these stories will come together to inform the mapping of the liberation heritage route.

I am confident that post this summit there will be substantial progress with regard to the project. The management of the legacy of the national liberation struggle through the LHR platform has been conceived and constructed to serve national interests especially the national imperatives of social cohesion and national identity.

The core elements which characterize the current implementation of the LHR are:

- Accessing the memory through research and community consultation
- Exploring possibilities of translating the rich heritage resources into economic capital
- Integrating the LHR in the planning systems of state institutions
- Ensuring profiling and strategic visibility of the project
- Contributing in the World Heritage Site tentative listing process

The articulation of the conceptual framework through seminars, consultative summits and workshops has provided much needed opportunities for communities to share their experiences in the collection of the memories of the struggle which are filled with pain, anger, hope and glory. A considerable measure of dedicated attention has been given to stakeholder management. Municipalities, government departments and institutions for economic co-ordination are continuously engaged as we lobby for the LHR sites to be development nodes with great potential. This summit is called upon to elaborate the targeted cumulative impact of LHR, which is the improvement of the socio-economic circumstances in areas where there are LHR sites. This project seeks to crystallize the need to capitalize, on a larger scale, the rich history of the national liberation struggle for developmental objectives. Therefore, the strategic focus of the LHR is not exclusive to heritage management, its integration in the political economy is an imperative that we should share as a country. Certainly, the challenge to stimulate cultural industries by unlocking value from the LHR can be realised through formal developmental relations and by factoring the LHR in the economic restructuring programmes at all levels.

Through this summit we seek to obtain stakeholder understanding of this project. Let us sustain the memory so that it contributes to national imperatives of social cohesion and the consolidation of common national identity. Fundamental values have been generated through the national liberation struggle experience. The defeat of apartheid colonialism indeed epitomized the triumph of the human spirit. Recognition of the road traversed towards freedom will indeed help in the strengthening of our democracy and will help our nation not to lose continuity in terms of the ideals of the liberation struggle.

I thank you