

Speech by Advocate Sonwabile Mancotywa at the North-West Provincial Liberation Heritage Route Summit Held In Rustenburg on the 5th And 6th March 2011

Programme Director

Reprehensive of the MEC for Arts and Culture

Honourable Mayor/s

And Councillors

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

South Africans pride themselves as having been involved in one of the most popular struggles towards freedom. Time has come to recreate and re-signify the story towards one of the longest liberation struggles in the African continent and the world at large. The NHC conceived of a Liberation Heritage Route which will be an embodiment of our collective experiences, our ideals, values and principles which unified a people who were subjected to national oppression through a repressive system. We seek to honour the freedom fighters who swelled the ranks of the liberation movement, the progressive movement, the clandestine structures, the guerrilla (military) formations those who carried high the banner through unprecedented international solidarity.

We welcome this opportunity to dialogue and exchange ideas with delegates at this summit. This summit marks the birth of a broad development front which will relentlessly pursue the objectives of the National Liberation Heritage Route. The [North-West Province](#) has been firm and decisive in leading the management of the memory of the national liberation. The Liberation Heritage Route Project is a national memorial designed as a collection of sites which depict the stories associated with the national liberation struggle. Such stories are narrated in different but linked sites across the country. With strong social and educational aspects the Liberation Heritage Route sites are also giving the historic character of towns, cities and communities and the embedded memory of these spaces. Such heritage embedded places carry great potential as magnets for eco-tourism and cultural tourism.

The probe into the past through the Liberation Heritage Route is drawing attention to the remarkable and painful journey to freedom which was characterised by deep human sacrifice. The evidence of this rich liberation heritage has served to inspire and invoke memories which remind the world about the universal importance of freedom and human dignity. The LHR will be a celebration and resurrection of the ideas and values which propelled generations of freedom fighters to pursue the national liberation struggle. The LHR promises to be the envisaged national monument of national pride. Liberation heritage has been an undervalued national inheritance. We are gathered here today to map out the provincial agenda which will elevate this category of heritage. Fortunately, Programme Director, our theoretical partnership with the provincial government on this project is maturing and is expected to yield results. Through the presence of all delegates today, we are already assured of your full support. In the spaces demarcated as North-West today, great battles and struggles had been fought. This space is proud to carry the stories individuals, epochs, events and the heroic leadership of the liberation movements and the broad progressive movement.

The National Heritage Council has a pro-active political engagement programme. Our national consultative programme has registered immense progress as all provincial governments have expressed commitment to the formation of Provincial Chapters. We are advocating for the creation of well-capacitated and formidable provincial structures. Synchronised implementation of the NLHR will be a product of high level management and political support. This will help the NHC to lead a coherent and more effective framework of implementation. Municipalities across the country are displaying an overwhelming interest and are our key partners in the national research programme.

Our greatest advantage is that there is national consensus that the LHR contains stories that have to be told. The national modelling of the route has started to take shape. The national research programme which has started in earnest will map and plot the NLHR as a series of sites linked together by a common historical narrative of the liberation struggle. Sites that will be identified will consist of evidence of significant events and will be rich information for the bid for World Heritage Site inscription. Through this research programme we expect the following:

- Identification of sites across South Africa and recognition of existing sites;
- Development of narratives for each site (liberation heritage content);
- Development of a statement of significance for each site;
- Photographic depiction of the sites and production of high quality documentary and ancillary audio visual material;
- National route mapping and packaging of the sites province by province.

What has infused national thinking on this project is that its strategies must be derived from a bottom-up approach. Of course, the project will be exposed to some of the contradictions and constraints in the development context. It is indeed our joint responsibility to protect the LHR against factors which negate its objectives.

This stage of national discourse has revealed the following:

- a) The LHR is a redress programme which seeks to fill the gap in the memorialisation of popular struggles for freedom;
- b) The LHR requires high level political prioritisation;
- c) Substantive investments are required towards the implementation of the LHR;
- d) The LHR can be utilized to catalyse socio-economic development and infrastructural investment;
- e) The material value of the LHR is of collective significance to the country;
- f) The LHR must fit seamlessly in the national policy objectives and the development vision of the government;

The reception of the NLHR has transcended the public sector attracting extensive interest from civil society, the intellectual environment, the private sector and international bodies such as UNESCO and UNIDO. This is part of South's Africa's contribution to world memory and we seek to benefit from a global discourse on the memorialisation of the liberation struggles in Africa. From this summit some of the vexed questions of cultural renewal in the context of the African Renaissance will be answered. In the reconstruction of our nation we are sourcing from continental experiences. With regard to the preservation of the memory of the national liberation struggles, we are setting the SADC agenda. Our submission to UNESCO to be put on the tentative list is part of a transnational serial nomination which will include SADC countries.

The Northern Cape is a custodian of many tangible and intangible heritage resources of the liberation struggle and there is expressed commitment to develop these resources and to provide impetus to the LHR initiative. From a national perspective, this province has enormous resources being home to some of the significant and extremely prominent sites.

We are greatly encouraged by the developments on the Gateway to Freedom Project, which will contribute in setting the standard of developing world class heritage sites which have educational, heritage, economic and social value for our people. We have discussions with the province on developing it as a strategic node and as a subject of research and knowledge production for the heritage sector.

This summit will help all delegates to have a shared understanding of the LHR. Key questions which must be addressed by this summit are the following?

- a) How do ensure that the LHR is grounded on the North-West experiences?
- b) How do we formulate a province wide strategy which will ensure coherence with the provincial strategy?

- c) How do we ensure seamless integration of the project in the work of municipalities and other development agencies?
- d) What should be our common planning, programming and monitoring mechanisms?
- e) What is our mass participation and community involvement programme?

From this summit we will collectively assess progress. Expectations are high that the LHR will promote social and economic progress and that it will provide impetus for the development of cultural industries and culture tourism. The overriding question which this summit must address is how we utilize our inter-relations to implement the LHR. How to reach a point where all municipalities and the provincial government sufficiently share resources and their experiences to realize this national agenda? We hope to leverage maximum value from the provincial summit, the local municipalities and the provincial government. It was the very liberation struggle which nurtured and entrenched a principled culture of sharing. We will attain the strategic objectives of the LHR. Let us pursue this agenda conscious of its value to social cohesion, national identity formation and transformation of the heritage sector.

I thank you.