



REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

MINISTRY OF WOMEN, YOUTH AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

**ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR HLENGIWE MKHIZE, DEPUTY
MINISTER IN THE DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN YOUTH AND
PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
DURING THE OCCASION
OF
THE COMMEMORATION AND CELEBRATION OF THE
BICENTENNIAL OF THE 25TH MARCH GREEK INDEPENDENCE
DAY
ON
DATE: SUNDAY 21ST MARCH 2021
12h00 – 13h30
SAHETI SCHOOL – MAIN SPORTS FIELD**

VERSION 3: DM INPUTS

Your Eminence – Archbishop Damaskinos

Your Excellencies Ambassadors and High Commissioners

Consul Generals and Consuls

President of the Hellenic Federation

Dignitaries and Guests

My Fellow South Africans

I greet you today on a particularly important day for South Africa. Today, South Africa recognises Human Rights Day – a day in which the sacrifices of countless South Africans is remembered. Today we remember in particular the 69 people killed and 180 wounded during a peaceful protest against the Pass Laws which sought to denigrate citizens to second class workers.

As we gather here today, we can draw parallels between South Africa's struggle with Apartheid, and the Greek's struggle under the Ottoman occupation.

The struggles waged by South Africans from colonial times are recognised and remembered under Human Rights Day. There are similarities between the revolutions waged by Greeks during the 400 years of the Ottoman occupation. Exactly, 200 years ago, under the war cry "**Freedom or Death**" the oppressed rose against the oppressors and claimed back the land of their forefathers. So dramatic was the Greek revolution that many other Balkan nations were encouraged to rise against the shackles of the Ottomans and modern Eastern Europe was born.

It is no strange fact then, that the Greeks and Cypriots have long been supporters of the peoples' struggles against the Apartheid and Colonial past. Refuge and assistance was provided by these two nations who understood the value of a free and just society. That gave respect and recognition of the Greeks and Cypriots. Former President Nelson Mandela expressed this in a succinct manner when he said, "Greece is the mother of Democracy and South Africa is her youngest daughter."

Ladies and Gentlemen, racial segregation and white supremacy had become central aspects of South African policy long before apartheid began. The controversial 1913 Land Act, passed three years after South Africa gained its independence, marked the beginning of territorial segregation by forcing black Africans to live in reserves and making it illegal for them to work as sharecroppers. Opponents of the Land Act formed the South African National Native Congress, which would become the African National Congress (ANC).

This year has been designated as a year of Charlotte Maxeke, a leader and a struggle veteran, who would have been 150 years this year. Mme Charlotte Maxeke was a woman activist who endured not only the oppressive Colonial government but also the exclusion of women from participating in politics.

For South Africans land is synonymous with identity. So as the South African Government proceeds with the Expropriation Bill, established to redress the Expropriation Act 63 of 1975, we are confident that equity and just access to resources will be addressed under this Bill. More so, provisions have been made under this Bill to ensure that women benefit from 50% of land expropriation. This

provision ensures that women, young women, and women with disabilities are compensated for South Africa's deeply misogynistic past.

Tata Madiba was a long-time close friend of Advocate George Bizos a giant of South African history and of global struggles. Advocate Bizos always stood by those who were persecuted for resisting the apartheid regime. Speaking about Advocate Bizos' commitment, Madiba said "*He was really devoted to the cause ...When he appeared for us, he did not do so as a man who is appearing for strangers, he did so as his contribution to a great cause to which we were all committed.*"

Just like Madiba; George Bizos was a credit to all of us for his tireless devotion to the struggle for democracy in South Africa. These two heroes had a profound commitment to human rights and social justice. They played a critical role in South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy and had a hand in the drafting of the interim constitution and the Bill of Rights.

The revolution was also a feat for Human Rights. We see echoes between the struggles of South Africans and those of the Hellenes such as the women who alongside their husbands, fathers and sons partook in the liberation struggle and the heroines of Zalongou who defied the Turks and sacrificed their lives to give the revolution the momentum it needed. We commemorate them all.

We are proud of our South Africans of Hellenic origin, who are patriots of SA but have managed to retain the ethos, traditions, and values of Hellenism. The Hellenic community's contribution to South Africa has been consistent and will remain steady as we steer our nation towards the ideals of a free, just, and democratic nation, united in its diversity.

The Hellenic Community is an ally of this government. Our alliances with the Hellenic people, and the alliances they build with communities is an example of social cohesion and community development the rest of South Africa can learn from.

As women of the world currently participate at the 65th Commission for the Status of Women, we are reminded of our roll in the global community, to ensure that alliances lead to development of our people, because there can be no celebration of success if even one person is marginalised or oppressed.

In his tenure as Chair of the African Union, His Excellency President of the Republic of South Africa Mr Cyril Ramaphosa declared this the decade of financial inclusion and economic empowerment of women. South Africa is committed to ensuring not only 50-50 parity in leadership, but ensuring an environment conducive to gender equality.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has reversed some of our hard-fought gains and as a result, women and girls are further exposed to violations of their human dignity due to gender-based violence, unemployment and poverty. As we seek to *re-build*, we need to ensure that those on the periphery are pulled into the centre with a sense of agency so as to allow them to shape their future.

I congratulate you on this important day for South Africa as well as people of Hellenic origin. Our shared history and experiences must motivate us to do better, to build better, and to foster greater alliances for participation of women, youth and persons with disabilities in everyday life.

God Bless South Africa and its people

God Bless the Hellenic spirit

ZITO I ELEFThERIA

ZITO I NOTIOS AFRIKI

VIVA I ELLAS