



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS

Republic of South Africa

MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MILITARY VETERANS HON. NOSIVIWE MAPISA-NQAKULA ADDRESS AT THE HANDING OVER OF MOBILE LABORATORIES TO THE UNIVERSITY OF FORT HARE, 18th JULY 2017

MANDELA DAY

Vice Chancellor of the University of Fort Hare, Professor Sokhela Buhlungu

Senior Members of the University Management

Members of the Armscor Executive Management

Members of the Ministry of Defence and Military Veterans and the Department of Defence

University students here present

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today, all over the world millions of people will take a pause to join activities in service of others and support causes to uplift disadvantaged individuals communities, in honour of Nelson Mandela on the occasion of what would have been his 99th birthday.

The declaration of the birthday of our former President Nelson Mandela as International Mandela Day, has over the past few years, given us an opportunity to emulate and continue his service to humanity. It has in turn also made a lot of impact and brought real change and relief to millions all over the globe.

In a similar vein, for over a century, the University of Fort Hare has represented the values of determination to service and the building of excellence in leadership that serves our people.

As we gather here today, therefore, we celebrate not only the birthday and life of Nelson Mandela, as father of our free nation, but the deep connection he has shared with the University of Fort Hare and its core values.

It is fitting therefore that today we come here to continue building on the ethos on which Nelson Mandela had based his life while contributing to a cause he championed, a cause to which this institution has dedicated more than a Century of

its work, the universal access to higher education for the disadvantaged communities in our country.

It was because of this character of the University, although forced on it by the discrimination policies of the time, that Nelson Mandela walked through these gates in 1939 to register as a student here.

Even then, as the only university in which black, coloured and Indian students were allowed to enrol, the University was already distinguishing itself as the cradle that that incubated future leaders for our people's struggle for freedom and democracy.

For many of these leaders, including amongst others Govan Mbeki; Oliver Tambo; Robert Sobukwe and many later generations, believed in the importance of education as a tool for incisive leadership. This they regarded as a necessity that must capacitate and prepare our people in the struggle for freedom and emancipation.

I want to commend therefore, both Armscor and the Department of Defence for choosing Fort Hare as the launching home for our or unveiling our contribution to building traction in technology oriented education in previously disadvantaged institutions of Higher Learning. We couldn't have chosen a better and more suitable partner as we seek to emulate and sustain Madiba's legacy and his own commitment to education.

President Mandela himself notably reminded us that "A good heart and a good head always make a formidable combination"; also adding that :

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."

Whilst he did not graduate here, immediately after first enrolling here, it is common cause that Nelson Mandela's intuition for leadership was cemented here. His sense of justice and stubborn belief in fairness caused him great troubles here, resulting in him being expelled. It was that departure from Fort Hare that set in motion a series of events in his life in the 1940s, including running away to Johannesburg and later joining ANC and his part in the founding of the ANCYL in 1944.

Today, this political journey of Nelson Mandela and many of his comrades that went on to lead the ANC and the struggle, is recorded in our archives that are also preserved here at the University of Fort Hare. On behalf of President Mandela, former President Thabo Mbeki unveiled these archives in 1996.

We are particularly proud of the association that this institution has with our people's struggle for freedom and its own contribution to it, not only here at home but in the region and the Continent as well.

As we mark Mandela Day today, we need to ponder and ask ourselves "what contribution are we making to our society and the world"? We have walked the talk of what President Nelson Mandela held close to his heart - education. Therefore as the

Ministry of Defence and Military Veterans, we have focused on the education of our country's young people.

It is in that regard that one of our entities, the Armaments Corporation of South Africa, Armscor, has partnered with institutions of higher learning as well as basic education. This is with the aim of exploring sustainable ways of assisting teachers and learners, mainly in the science, technology and mathematics (STEM) subjects.

Since 2016 Armscor started a collaboration with the University of Fort Hare to create awareness amongst our young people about the expansive areas of science and engineering within the defence sector.

Whilst we have targeted and entered into partnership with Fort Hare, as indicated earlier, we see it also necessary to lend a helping hand to young people at high school with a particular focus on the science, technology and mathematics subjects. This we do by offering extra tuition every Saturday.

This has resulted in this Learnership Intervention Programme seeing no less than two hundred and eighty (280) learners from thirty (30) schools around Bisho and Alice benefitting from the programme.

The success of this programme, which we intend to expand, has ensured that we have increased the number of students entering university within the science and technology fields, thus providing a career opportunity for them to pursue within the defence industry and beyond. We firmly believe this will continue to allow them to reach their full potential.

This program and its support will also go a long way in generating centers of excellence in defence engineering and science, not only here at Fort Hare but also throughout institutions of higher learning in South Africa.

We have decided to focus specifically on historically disadvantaged universities who have not had the kind of support expected from industry in general but the defence sector in particular.

We thus intend to further expose academia to the end result of future plans and encourage innovation, thus strengthening the South African defence industry.

In further pursuit of this goal, we are today handing over mobile computer science laboratories to the University of Fort Hare.

This is the beginning of a few steps we are taking to ensure that we give support to our young people to enhance their education, and aim to expand this even further in the coming years.

In the next year we will be holding our biannual aerospace maritime and defence exhibition, AAD 2018. It is my wish that some of the students who have succeeded through this programme grace us with their presence to mark some of the achievements they are gradually making in the academic field. We also wish to indicate that this would not be the end of the programme, but we will see them

through to completion of their studies and entry into the defence science and engineering space, making their contribution to innovation.

It is my firm hope that with these initiatives we will contribute to the increase of investment in research and development in the country, thus making a significant impact to our country's economy and gross domestic product.

Today I feel pride in our ability to push even further the work that Nelson Mandela and many of his compatriots strated and championed, to improve the quality of education of the African child. We vow to continue to mobilise our people, government, business and NGOs, to continue to emulate Madiba. Let our children say, I want to serve, I want to be like Madiba.

I thank you