



**Keynote Address by the Sedibeng District Municipality Executive Mayor, Cllr. Mahole Simon Mofokeng on the occasion of the Africa Liberation Day Gauteng held at the Constitutional Square, Vereeniging, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2010, in Sedibeng.**

---

Programme Director;

Executive Mayor, Emfuleni Local Municipality, Cllr. Assistance Mshudulu

Speaker, Sedibeng District Municipality;

MMC of SRAC&H, Sedibeng District Municipality, Cllr Mluleki Nkosi;

Chief Whip, Sedibeng District Municipality, Cllr Khulu Malindi;

Members of the Mayoral Committee;

Fellow Councilors;

Officials and Members of Staff;

Distinguished Guests;

Members of our Media Fraternity;

People of Sedibeng;

**Programme Director**, let me greet all the people of Sedibeng who have braved the cold nip of the winter morning to come to this august occasion today. This day has not been lost on us. It is 16 Days to the kick off of the 2010 FIFA World Cup here in South Africa. This day is made very significant, in that it is held at hallowed grounds of the South African Constitutional Square. Suffice it to mention that there is no other Constitutional Square anywhere else in the country.

On April 15, 1958, in the city of Accra in Ghana, African leaders and political activists met at the first Conference of Independent African States. This meeting was attended by the governments of Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Morocco, Sudan, Egypt and Syria.

This conference represented the collective expression of African People's disgust with the system of colonialism and imperialism which brought so much suffering to the African People. This also represented the collective will to see the system of colonialism permanently done away with in a joint, coordinated and unified action.

The Conference called for the founding of African Freedom Day, a day to “Mark each year the onward progress of the liberation movement, and to symbolize the determination of the People of Africa to free themselves from foreign domination and exploitation”

**Programme Director**, five years later another historical meeting was convened. On May 25, 47 years ago, leaders of thirty-two independent African States met to form the Organization of African Unity(OAU). At that time, more than two-thirds of the continent had achieved independence from colonial rule.

At this meeting, the date for Africa Freedom Day was changed from April 15<sup>th</sup> to May 25<sup>th</sup> and Africa Freedom Day was declared African Liberation Day and has been held in every corner of the continent and the world since.

The thrust for liberation was felt by the people of South Africa. Under the leadership of the ANC, both in exile and in the country, our people and communities said enough is enough. It is not a mere coincidence that the people of Sharpeville stood up to be counted fifty years ago. It is not a

coincidence that the communities across the District here in Sedibeng rose at various important times to fight against the settler minority regime.

With the winds of freedom blowing from the North, it was no coincidence that South Africa became the last outpost to be liberated on the continent.

It is no coincidence that we have the best constitution on the continent and the world. This is so because we learned from the shortcomings of the entire continent.

It is not an oversight, that our democracy is participatory, it is not by hindsight that our system of governance includes traditional leaders, this so because we learned that we cannot throw away in a wholesale manner, those practices and institutions that held us together during the madness that was apartheid, keeping brother from brother on the basis of the colour of their skin and the sharpness of their noses.

We dare not forget the sacrifices that were made in the quest to liberate this country. Despite the miracle of a negotiated settlement, a lot of blood, sweat, tears, life and limb, went into bringing about a settlement in this country. Let us remember Operation Vula, when the negotiations were moving towards a stalemate, the ANC developed this operation.

This project was aimed at ensuring that we do not lay down our arms hoping that negotiations would be the end all. The popular slogan on the African Liberation Day Celebration in 1990 in Washington DC in the USA was” We South African will not stop the war to negotiate; we will negotiate to stop the war”. This was in support of the Operation Vula.

We in Sedibeng district Municipality, the custodians of the Cradle of Human Rights Struggles in South Africa, will not be found wanting in preserving the history of this country. We have though deliberate and well thought out programmes pledged ourselves to the following IDP imperatives in clear support of days such as this:

- Develop a comprehensive heritage program
- Support the geographical name change programmes
- Develop a Turn Around strategy for the museums and theatres in the District
- Implement a Turn Around strategy for museums and theatres in the District
- Implement a program for identified commemorative days

The great African American scholar Dr Henry Clarke reminds us that” History is a clock that people use to tell their political and cultural time of

the day. It is also a compass that people use to find themselves on the map of human geography”.

Professor Clarke further states “History tells a people where they are and what they are. Most important, an understanding of history tells a people where they still must go and what they still must be”

Our history indicates that we cannot afford to have another oppressive state in South Africa, our history dictates that we cannot have another minority regime, our history points us away from the unconstitutional regime changes that are the order of the day throughout the continent. Our future points us the jealous and steadfast determination and protection of our hard fought freedom at all cost. History reminds us that we cannot take our liberation for granted.

It is for that reason therefore that this day serves to remind us to continue on our path of development of our region and our people so that they also will find reason to celebrate this freedom. We will be vigilant to take our communities into our confidence, together in unison; we will chart the way forward to provide speedy service delivery.

I Thank You.