

SPEECH BY AMBASSADOR DR. AMINA MOHAMED, EGH, CAV, CABINET SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, DURING THE UNVEILING CEREMONY OF THE BUSTS OF NELSON MANDELA AND DEDAN KIMATHI, AT THE DEDAN KIMATHI UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, ON 16TH JANUARY, 2019

Your Excellency, Madam Koleka Anita Mqulwana, the High Commissioner of South Africa to Kenya,

Governor Nyeri County Mutahi Kahiga and Governors Francis Kimemia and Hon Mureithi Nderitu

Representative of the Makueni Governor Mr Muema

Hon Members of Parliament, Hon Wambugu and Hon Jeremiah Kioni

Our heros and heroines , Gitau kahengeri

Mrs Mukami Kimathi and the Kimathi family

Clergy,

CEO Stanbic and other sponsors

Your Excellencies, Ambassadors and High Commissioners,

My colleagues from various Ministries,

Chair of Council and members of council

Chancellors, Council Members, Vice Chancellors and Senators,

Members of Staff and non staff

students,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to be part of this event at which we celebrate the lives of Nelson Mandela, the former President of the Republic of South Africa, Albertina Sisulu, an outstanding leader of the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, and a key advocate for women's rights, and Dedan Kimathi wa Chiuri, leader of the Mau Mau freedom fighters.

All the three we are celebrating today were icons of liberation struggles in Africa who dedicated their lives to fighting the racial oppression and domination of Africans. They were phenomenal leaders who embodied tenacity, strength, fortitude and hope during the darkest moments in the history of their respective societies.

Often, in their struggle to build better and just societies, they faced severe challenges and would find themselves in life threatening situations - the first two in the hands of the apartheid system in South Africa and the other in the Kenyan British colonial system. In the course of the struggle, they were

incarcerated and humiliated, with Dedan Kimathi paying the ultimate price of brutal execution.

Through their suffering and sacrifices, they bequeathed to us, and future generations, an enduring heritage of freedom. They were determined and deserve our unqualified honour and respect. Moreover, they are object lessons in themselves, especially with regard to selflessness, courage, respect for human dignity, compassion for the poor, the weak, and the downtrodden as well as an unquestionable commitment to justice and truth.

Throughout history, these virtues and values have formed the foundation for just, democratic and enduring societies. It is my hope that we will call these lessons to mind as we unveil the busts of Nelson Mandela and Dedan Kimathi. Without these virtues and values, no society can be sustainable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Celebrating our heroes' and heroines provides an opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices they made as well as the progress that has been made in realizing the ideals they championed. Dedan Kimathi braved hunger and harsh cold weather in the Aberdare

and Mt. Kenya forests where he led thousands of freedom fighters in a military campaign against the British colonial occupation of Kenya. Britain, an imperial military superpower, had to employ elite troops to contain the insurgency. Even then, it took over three years to end the struggle, and by the time it was over, Kenya had changed for good and British colonial rule was no longer a tenable proposition. Kimathi's determination to fight to the bitter end was best captured in his famous resolve that "I would rather die on my legs than live on my knees."

Albertina Sisulu, in 1956, risked her life by supporting the organization of the Anti-Pass protest in which about 20,000 women participated. Nelson Mandela, her compatriot, changed the course of ANC struggle for a democratic and multi-racial South Africa, when he spearheaded the establishment of the Umkhonto we Siswe in a bid to step up pressure against the apartheid regime. He subsequently persevered loneliness, torture, hunger and humiliation in prison for 27 long years and yet remained unbroken.

Nelson Mandela finally came out of prison to lead a free, democratic and nonracial South Africa. He stunned the world with his attitude to his former oppressors when he declared that he harboured no malice against them. Instead, he sought forgiveness and reconciliation. He taught us the true meaning of forgiveness when he wrote, and I quote "as I walked out of the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn't leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I'd still be in prison." Mandela would later reflect that "to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others."

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Irish lawyer, John Philpot Curran, wrote in 1790 that "the condition upon which God hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance." It is therefore our responsibility, as the beneficiaries of liberty obtained through the struggles of our forebears, to be continually alert to threats to our freedom. It is our duty to also carry forward the struggle against outstanding forces that constrain our freedom.

In other words, although the struggle of these heroes' resulted in freedom from colonialism and apartheid, there were yet more freedoms to fight for. In fact, Mandela reflected rightly when he wrote that "after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb." In this regard, victory over the apartheid and colonial systems was only one hill to be climbed in the journey to freedom. There were many more hills to climb to attain freedom, especially freedom from poverty, ignorance and disease.

Nelson Mandela, Dedan Kimathi and Albertina Sisulu believed in the creation of just and equitable societies which would offer equal opportunities for all. This would be in all sectors of national endeavour including education, health care, housing as well as cultural and socio-economic development that would expand the scope of possibilities and freedoms for the people. Political freedom was only one step in this direction.

The Kenya government has remained committed to the realization of these goals that our freedom fighters fought for. Our constitution, our democratic practices and our efforts to grow the economy speak for our determination to promote and safeguard our freedoms as understood in the widest sense.

In particular, we have paid keen attention to education which, as Mandela said is "the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." It is inspiring to remember that even at the height of the fight against apartheid in the 1970s, and during the Soweto uprising in 1976, Mandela urged South Africans to make every effort to see that children attend school. We now also have letters written by Dedan Kimathi denouncing the closure of schools during the peak of the Mau Mau war as this went against the goals of the liberation struggle.

In this spirit, Kenya has over the years invested massively in education. Today, we offer free primary and free day secondary education, we have medical insurance for our secondary learners, We have also widened opportunities for education in tertiary and higher education institutions. We are leaving no one behind in the provision of education and we are keen to ensure we offer quality and relevant education at all levels.

I have singled out education because our survival as a nation today increasingly depends on our ability to create, develop and make use of new scientific discoveries. In our age, those who

innovate and develop new technologies will be the modern day heroes and heroines who will enhance our ability to tackle the developmental and social challenges facing our country.

Our Government is fully aware of this imperative and has taken steps to create the appropriate ecosystem, infrastructure and policies to support innovation. As the line Ministry in this regard, we are strengthening research and development which is the bedrock of innovation. While we are focusing primarily on our Universities and research institutions, which constitute an

essential part of the innovation value chain, we are also encouraging innovation and creativity across our education system.

I urge leaners in this and other Universities in the country to take the mantle of expanding and safeguarding our freedoms by opening new frontiers of knowledge and innovation. I believe that education is the single most important key to freedom.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As we seek to expand our freedom, we also have a responsibility to honour our heroes and heroines and to ensure that future generations also appreciate and celebrate their sacrifices. The busts unveiled today are excellent monuments to the contributions of Nelson Mandela and Dedan Kimathi. They will serve as constant reminders for generations to come of our rich history, our resilience and our commitment to be eternally vigilant in safeguarding our liberties.

The location of these busts in an educational institution will further enhance our efforts in teaching the noble virtues and values that these heroes and heroines epitomized. It is encouraging that this University plans to establish a museum as

a teaching facility that will help chronicle modern African history from the African perspective as well as inculcate these values. This is important in enabling upcoming generations to understand their roots and how to carry forward the vision of those who have gone before them.

Albertina Sisulu captured this imperative most aptly when she observed, and I quote "we are each required to walk our own road and then stop, assess what we have learnt, and share it with others. It is only in this way that the next generation can learn from those who have walked before them. We can do no

more than tell our story. Then it is up to them to make of it what they will."

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen, I thank the South African Government for inviting us to partner in the Nelson Mandela and Albertina Sisulu birth centenary celebrations and for mooting the idea of developing and erecting the two busts at Dedan Kimathi University of Technology. I specifically thank the High Commissioner, Anita Mqulwana, for leading these celebrations in Kenya, and particularly for this inspired project of the busts. Madam Anita Mqulwana, thank you very much, asante sana.

It is my hope that these busts will serve to challenge each one of us to follow in the footsteps of these icons so that we too can leave enduring imprints of freedom and progress on the sands of time. I close with Mandela's observation that "there can be no greater gift than that of giving one's time and energy to helping others without expecting anything in return."

Thank you and God bless you