Address by President Dr J G Zuma, on the occasion of the 25th commemoration of the tragic death of Former President Samora Moises Machel of Mozambique and those travelling with him, Mbuzini, Mpumalanga Province

17 October 2011

Your Excellency, President of the Republic of Mozambique, our friend, brother and comrade, Armando Guebuza;
Madame Graça Machel and family;
Members of families that lost their loved ones in Mbuzini 25 years ago;
Honourable Minister of Arts and Culture, Mr Paul Mashatile;
Honourable Minister of Culture of Mozambique, Armando Artur Joao and other members of the sister Government of Mozambique;
Honorable Premier of Mpumalanga Mr David Mabuza;
Honorable Governor of Maputo Province, Ms. Maria Elias Jonas;
Members of the Diplomatic Corps;
Fellow Mozambicans and fellow South Africans;
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen;

It is an honour and a privilege for me to host my dear brother and Comrade, His Excellency President Guebuza as well as the family of Comrade President Samora Machel and those of others who perished on that tragic day 25 years ago.

On this very same day, 25 years ago, President Samora Machel and his delegation, returning from an international meeting in Lusaka, Zambia perished when the presidential aircraft crashed here in the Lebombo Mountains in Mbuzini.

President Samora Machel and thirty-three others died, including ministers and officials of the Mozambique government, lost their lives in that shocking mysterious incident.

We took a decision then, that the blood that was shed in Mbuzini, and the blood of Comrade President Samora Machel and those who were travelling with him when the plane crashed, would not flow in vain.

That blood that watered the tree of freedom, now binds the two peoples together in friendship and comradeship.

The ANC, angered by the death of President Samora Machel, Aquino de Braganca, Fernando Honwana and other heroes of the African struggles for freedom, continued to spearhead the struggle against racial oppression, colonialism and apartheid in South Africa.

Our victory was attained, and on the 27th of April 1994 we ushered in freedom and democracy in our country.

My predecessors, President Nelson Mandela and President Thabo Mbeki have also been to this site during their tenure, to pay homage to the heroes and heroine who fell on this site, remembering their contribution to the attainment of our freedom.

This consistency indicates the importance that South Africa attaches to the ties that bind us as the South African and Mozambican people.

Ladies and gentlemen,
Comrades and friends,

This 25th anniversary enables us to pay tribute again to President Samora Machel, a
gallant fighter for freedom, a combatant of outstanding revolutionary principles, and an activist for a better life for the people of the region and Africa.

We are paying tribute to a liberator, whose teachings and influence was not only felt in Mozambique but also in the entire Southern African region, the continent and beyond.

Former President and Comrade Samora Machel had never taken his country's responsibility for granted.

He used his own freedom and country's independence to assist those who were under the yoke of slavery, colonialism and Apartheid. This was at great cost to his life and his country's prosperity.

His leadership of the revolution in Mozambique inspired the oppressed masses of South Africa to shout out loud, for the whole world to hear that Aluta Continua!!

We register yet again, our sincere gratitude to the Mozambican people for the solidarity and friendship that was extended to us during our struggle for freedom.

Your Excellency
Esteemed guests,

The South African government decided to build the Mbuzini Memorial and museum to commemorate and also recognize the heroic contributions made by all those that fell here 25 years ago.

We built this monument and a museum so that our future generations could learn from the experiences of their forefathers.

We did this so that future generations throughout Africa could live in peace side by side and enjoy their racial, cultural, linguistic and religious diversity in peace and dignity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This is one of many other monuments we should still build.

Those of you who are not so young will remember the tragic events of the so called cross border raids and attacks launched by the apartheid government.

Our neighbouring sister countries such as Mozambique, Swaziland, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Angola were main targets.

These saw many of our brothers and sisters abducted and killed for fighting for their freedom. Mozambique was specifically targeted for brutal raids such as the Matola Raid and an air raid in a suburb adjacent to Matola.

These raids are a painful reminder of the suffering of the peoples of our two countries in defence of revolutionary ideals and freedom.

On the 8th of July 2011, both our governments laid the foundation stone of the Matola Monument and Interpretative Centre.

I am looking forward to officially opening this sacred monument of our shared history
and heritage early next year with you, My dear Brother and Comrade.

May I also take this opportunity to thank the government and the people of Mozambique for extending an invitation to myself and the people of South Africa to the commemoration in Maputo on the 19th in two day's time.

May I confirm that I have accepted the invitation and we will be with you in Maputo when you host the 25th Commemoration in your beautiful country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have fought great wars in defence of our country, continent and our dignity. But it is important that we learn good lessons from these wars. Wars destroy families, wars impoverish nations, wars bring grief and untold suffering to both the victors and the victims. Both countries are finally experiencing peace and stability. Our peoples must now reap the dividends of peace and liberation. None of us would ever want to go back to a period of conflict and war.

A nation that is at peace with itself creates a climate that is conducive to productive economic and social activity and contributes positively to improvement of the standard of living for its citizens and its neighbours. There is progress in both countries.

To remember 100 years of struggle and celebrate peace, South Africa will, on the 8th of January next year, celebrate the centenary of the ANC, the oldest liberation movement in Africa.

Allow me once again Your Excellency, to invite you, once again Your Excellency, to celebrate with us on that day.

I am taking the advantage of inviting you, Your Excellency, on this occasion, in addition to formal communication that I have sent already in this regard. The Centenary of the ANC recognizes the immense contribution of the bloodshed by these stalwarts in working to destroy Apartheid in South Africa, colonialism in the continent and a fight for a better life for all in the world.

The centenary will provide an opportunity for all of us to tell the stories of the revolution that made our two countries free and stable democracies.

We must tell our children how the heroes of the African continent fought tirelessly, so that they could be able to walk around as free people in the countries of their birth.

The liberation heritage of Africa must not suffer as we chase the important goals of building a better life and improving the social and economic status of our people. Issues of heritage define who we are, define our history and our future. Let the stories be told, let the monuments be built, not matter how long it takes us.

We must develop liberation heritage routes and footprints of monuments of freedom in our countries and around the continent. In that way, the deaths of Comrade Samora Machel and scores of other stalwarts will not have been in vain.

Your Excellency,

It will be amiss of me not to congratulate the Government and the people of the
Republic of Mozambique for hosting the most successful All Africa games to date.

You and your government have once again proven that Africa, given an opportunity, can compete with the best in the world in terms of talents and ability to host mega-events of an international standing.

In November, in Durban we will be hosting the biggest gathering on climate change called COP 17. This is just a year after successfully hosting the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup.

All these developments are good news for Africa and our region. Let us hold each other's hands and reclaim the glory and beauty that our ancestors and God bestowed on this beautiful continent.

Excellency Comrade President Guebuza,
Esteemed guests and families,
Comrades from Mozambique fellow South Africans,
Thank you for joining us on this important occasion.
May the blood of our martyrs continue to bind us towards a better life for all our peoples.

We are one people.
Obrigado.

Source: Website: www.thepresidency.gov.za