It is instructive and highly remarkable that today once again the entire world has paused in order to focus on one important episode in the life of a living legend, a hero of his people, a global statesman for peace, an iconic personality who is one of a kind – Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela... Madiba!

Today leaders of the world – Presidents, Prime Ministers, Kings, Queens and the millions of people from all walks of life, the majority of whom are ordinary persons - all in unison are rejoicing in celebration of Nelson Mandela’s Birthday. It is a day of goodwill thanks to all countries of the world as assembled in the United Nations Organisation which declared the 18th of July of each year throughout the world: Nelson Mandela Day.
This initiative is the brain child of the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory under the auspices of the Mandela Foundation whose mission, as directed by Nelson Mandela himself, is the preservation of his legacy.

This colloquium jointly organized here in Umthatha by the Mandela Museum and the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory which have brought together experts, academics, scholars, leaders in government and society – in a word thought leaders - epitomises the taking forward of the legacy of Mandela premised upon the archival material which chronicles the giant footsteps of his life experience.

There are legacies and legacies. Some personalities in the world leave behind themselves memories which should remain forgotten. Such is best captured in the Shakespearean dictum from *As You
Like It: “All the world’s at stage, and all the men and women merely players: They have their exits and their entrances”

This resonates with Shakespearean Macbeth that “…Life is but walking shadow, a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage, and is heard no more. (Theirs) is a tale told by an idiot full of sound and fury signifying nothing”

Not so with Mandela. Powerful legacies are measured by the firm footprints left by giants in the sands of time. In this regard we think of greats such as Mahatma Ghandi, John Langalibalele Dube, Abraham Lincoln, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, Albert Einstein, Julius Nyerere, Isaac Newton, Mohamed Ali, Wangari Mathai, William Du Bois, Steve Jobs, Professor Tobias, Oliver Tambo… the list is endless.
This colloquium geared towards the exchange of ideas is duty bound to go beyond the sixty seven minutes designated for good deeds in the name of Mandela; beyond sixty seven hours, beyond sixty seven days and months, beyond sixty seven years which embodies Madiba’s time of active struggle against human oppression and indignity - for justice, freedom and equality.

It is for this reason that we say: Beyond the sixty seven minutes let’s make each day a Mandela day. We as South Africans should consider ourselves the luckiest people on this planet at this time to live in the same country breathing the same air under the same sun with Nelson Mandela. We as citizens of this country, black and white, should carry our heads high wherever we go in the world and proclaim ourselves - South Africans!
However, this comes with great responsibilities. Thus this Mandela Museum together with the Mandela Centre of Memory has the singular responsibility of not merely bearing his name. Archival material of many distinguished people worldwide lies wasted and unused as no life is breathed into them.

Our responsibility is to ensure that the name of Nelson Mandela, the struggle of his life, the example of his leadership, the guiding light of his principles, the energy of his youth, the robustness of his discourse, the defiance of his campaigns, his commitment to socio economic justice, the charter of his freedoms, the tribulations of his trials, the soldier of his people, the courage of his convictions, the years of his imprisonment, the triumph of his release, the art of his negotiations, the father of democracy, the unifier of his nation, the
magnanimity of his presidency, the spirit of his philanthropy - In a word his long walk to freedom.

All these archival steps for them not to be buried under sand dunes must become living artifacts and documents for a global call to action and pointers to a better world and a better future for all mankind.

This colloquium shall have served its purpose if it delves deeper into the archival material of all liberation organizations in our country in particular, and the history of South Africa in general in disciplines including medicine, economics, science engineering but not merely politics. This is to ensure that our national archive, our common heritage, reflects the true history of our country without any distortions such as was done under apartheid rule.
It stands to reason therefore that beyond this colloquium archival material must continue to provoke thinking, thoughts, ideas and theories which necessarily must be formed into words that challenge each other in the art of the dialectic of dialogue.

A great German philosopher and social scientist made a profound observation about the objective of philosophical discourse by stating: “Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point however, is to change it” This is the essence of the festival and battle of ideas.

Archives of great personalities and events must give no comfort to autocrats, despots, authoritarians, and non democrats. Tyrants must not find joy in people’s archives. The poor, the hungry, those without shelter and human rights should find
inspiration and hope when they interact with such material. Likewise any person who is oppressed in any part of the world should find solace in the archives of this museum and related ones in our country.

In a recent colloquium entitled Quo Vadis: The Media and State attended by members of the Fourth Estate, all and sundry concluded that media archives likewise should be aimed at providing society with more light and less heat.

Living archives must be accessible to all and sundry not merely to academics and scholars but to ordinary people as well. Afterall archival material is the record of history and common people, more than leaders, are the true makers of history. We live in a world of high technological innovations particularly in the world of informatics.
Therefore access to archival material implies the easy availability of information and communication technologies by the common people. At the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory we are thankful to the partnership established with Google to enable the dissemination of the message of Madiba to reach all the four corners of our planet.

Such technological innovation has made it possible not merely to package archival material about our revolutionary struggle for political and economic democracy in hard drives, compact disks and memory sticks.

Most importantly modern information technology now enables us to store material in CLOUDS located within electro-magnetic fields, away from reactionary elements and regimes.
The military dictators of Egypt failed to prevent the heroes of Tahrir Square from accessing information about their own country and revolution from across the world. The moral of this lesson to all oppressors is that: The truth cannot be shut away even by the force of tanks. (SMS facebooks tweets chat rooms)

It is for this reason that this colloquium has to keep in mind the sorry tale which is unfolding before our own eyes on our own continent in the West African state of Mali. There the famous manuscripts of Timbuktu – one of the oldest historical archives of we the African people, a UNESCO recognized World Heritage Site – are threatened with destruction following the capture of this great and ancient city of African civilization by uncivilized rebels.

It is ironical that whereas colonialist, whenever they spoke about Timbuktu always meant a place far-off the beaten track epitomizing backwardness, have found in today’s war mongering rebels accessories
in the commission of the crime to destroy historic monuments and irreplaceable archives of knowledge accumulated over many centuries.

Consequently the Special Resolution of this week’s African Union summit condemning the actions of northern Mali rebels should not only be welcomed but must be echoed by all right thinking people across the world; because the destruction of knowledge is equivalent to killing history, heritage and the future of whole generations.

In conclusion it is vital to continue to remind ourselves that this colloquium is held within the context of today’s much larger global colloquium of the peoples of the world who are celebrating the life and times of one of the most important and emblematic of icons – Nelson Mandela.
Indeed, he is a living global archive whose philosophy can be summarized in one word, *Mandela-ism*: the spirit of selflessness, sacrifice, people’s soldier, prisoner, president, freedom fighter, philanthropist, dedicated-democrat, scholar, lawyer, revolutionary, visionary, reconciler, unifier, nationalist and internationalist. Long live Mandela-ism!

Let the message of his example, the lessons of his method echo from Mvezo to Qunu, from Qunu throughout the country, from South Africa to our continent, and from Africa to all countries of the world - as was proclaimed in the Special Resolution of the UNO's General Assembly which designated this day Mandela Day.

May his name like those of many icons live forever!  

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MADIBA!