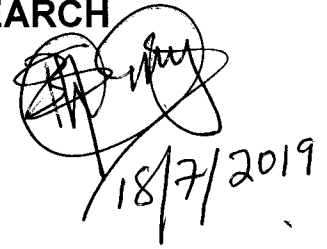


**THE SPEECH COMMEMORATING NELSON MANDELA
INTERNATIONAL DAY DURING THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH
OF THE INSTITUTE OF HUMAN RIGHTS RESEARCH
IN SUVA, FIJI ON 18th July 2019**



Handwritten signature and date: 18/7/2019

His Excellency, Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Speaker of Parliament of the Republic of Fiji;

Former Governor-General of Republic of New Zealand, The Rt Hon Sir Anand Satyanand;

Mr François Martel, Secretary General of Pacific Islands Development Forum (PIDF);

Dr Chitralekha Massey, Regional Representative of Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights;

Professor Shaista Shameem, University of Fiji;

Distinguished Invited Guests;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

Greetings to you all.

Ni sa Bula.

Thank you for inviting the South African High Commission to feature at this significant occasion of the launch of the Institute of Human Rights Research.

As the people and the Government of the Republic of South Africa, we are particularly very glad that you chose this occasion to coincide with the 10th Anniversary of the commemoration of Nelson Mandela International

Day, since it was unanimously declared by the UN General Assembly in November 2009.

In moments like this, we are faced with uncomfortable question: *Should we remember Mandela - the man, or Mandela - the idea?*

On a personal level, I have to confess to my Achilles Heel: I have an amazing weakness for Mandela.

I simply love Mandela - The man and the idea:

His towering, indefatigable figure; his open welcoming arms; his walk; his gaiety; his charisma; his wisdom; his gallantry; his audacity; his tenacity; his militancy; his altruism; and of course, his humaneness - Ubuntu. A rare combination of these virtues in one human being, certainly, defeats imagination.

I think, you too have some irrational weakness for:

Either Mandela, Steve Biko, Dr Martin Luther Jr, Malcolm X, Mahatma Gandhi, Ché Guevara or Mother Theresa, and so on.

These are some of the world's greatest in our lifetime.

But, we are here to commemorate the late Mandela. At some point, he attracted a deification on a grand scale, whether he liked it or not.

Yes, Mandela was deeply uncomfortable with being removed far away from the toil of his masses to be put at some ivory towers.

He didn't want to be remembered through statues, naming of buildings, bridges and streets, memorabilia, merchandise, tourist symbols, hagiographies, or as an icon.

Nor did he like to be elevated dominantly above others, especially his fellow comrades such as OR Tambo and Walter Sisulu, who have, indeed, recruited him to join the fight against Apartheid and the struggle for freedom.

Mandela preferred, rather, to be remembered in action. As a man who was in the furnace of the relentless fight for freedom, social justice, human dignity and equality for all.

Since 1942 when he embarked on his long journey of 67 years of a fight against Apartheid and a struggle for freedom, Mandela had a brief stint in underground military training in exile, and served tedious 27 years in prison.

Always, he was in action!

Mandela did not flinch, did not submit, and did prosecute the freedom struggle for a just South Africa, better Africa and a noble world order.

He was our greatest champion of democracy, freedom, peace and human rights.

When he became the first President of South Africa under democracy, he continued to call for freedom, justice and equality for all, especially for women and children in our society.

Most importantly, as the founding President of a democratic South Africa, Mandela - the idea, bequeathed a legacy of a world-renowned Constitution to his country.

Let me argue that Mandela could have surrendered to the worldly greed by mutating himself into a father-figure, a tyrant, a dictator, a despot or a King. And I would further argue that his people could have been gullible and acquiesced in their millions.

Instead, Mandela, the visionary, chose to put South Africa on an irreversible path of democracy, human rights, justice, equality and peace for all.

The world watched in awe as South Africa resolved to heal the divisions of its past through its "*Talanoa*" dialogue – Truth and Reconciliation Commission to establish a peaceful society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights.

Let me therefore reiterate that the South African Constitution enjoins us as a Government to have a state practice, and indeed a diplomatic stance that promotes, protects, respects and fulfil **ALL** human rights at home, and abroad.

All human rights, I must emphasize.

The South African Constitution embraces economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, including the right to development as equal, indivisible and interdependent. This reflects the Vienna spirit of the indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights.

Similarly, Mandela firmly believed that without access to human rights, a holistic people-centred development is not possible. He further believed that if people are economically excluded, then they are not in a position to enjoy their civil and political rights.

With this, South Africa firmly believes that the Human Rights Council (HRC), of which is currently a member, is one of the most important, effective and apex institutions of the United Nations.

To this effect, we applaud the HRC for being responsive to human rights violations and abuses from everywhere across the globe.

Inspired by the ubiquitous spirit of Mandela, South Africa continues to be seized with addressing contemporary challenges facing human rights achievements so far.

South Africa's approach to human rights is coupled with a principled belief that peace and dialogue, and **NOT** recourse to violence are the best ways to resolve conflicts, and build peaceful societies as envisioned in the UN Agenda 2030 and Africa's Agenda 2063.

Following Mandela's vision, South Africa calls and joins all the peoples to re-imagine a world free of poverty, free from hunger, free from disease

and free from war. A vision for a better South Africa, in a better Africa and better world for all.

What more could we have asked for from Nelson Mandela, than universal access to all human rights by all the peoples across the globe?

Indeed, the late Mandela personified human rights and the struggle for justice and equality for all. He embodied the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, including the 9 core human rights treaties.

As our greatest human rights champion of our time, the late Mandela cherished, lived and was prepared to die for an ideal world of democracy, human rights, social justice and equality for all.

He exuded paramount values of compassion, love, forgiveness, forgetting, healing, reconciliation, peace, dialogue, unity, solidarity, fairness and shared prosperity.

In the same vein, as a moral leader for the promotion and protection of human rights, the HRC should not turn a blind eye to the following challenges of our time:

Extremism, Terrorism, right-wing Populism; narrow Nationalism, neo-Fascism; Xenophobia; Racism; anti-Semitism and Migration.

South Africa will not lack behind in its contribution to fight and push back these scourges.

In addition, there is an imperative and urgency to join forces in the “Action against Poverty,” as Mandela warned:

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.”

Let me pledge that South Africa will work with, and build alliances with like-minded countries to push back the threat to multilateralism and climate change.

Yes, South Africa will continue to join action in a push for human rights-based solutions to climate catastrophe – a climate justice. As a country, we are aware that the impacts of climate change already hinder our rights to health, food, water, housing, work and even life itself. Severe weather, poverty or oppression make the human security in vulnerable situations even harder to achieve. Only multilateral efforts can reverse this storm of climate crisis from the looming apocalypse on the horizon.

As I conclude.

The late Mandela abhorred injustice, inequality, racism, discrimination and related intolerances that are based on race, sex, gender, religion, origin, and sexual orientation.

Nevertheless, as we achieve successes, new challenges emerge.

More still needs to be done to fill the promotion and protection gaps in the realm of human rights.

In the midst of such, Mandela had this to share:

“I have discovered the secret that after climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.

I have taken the moment to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surround me, to look back on the distance I have come. But, I can only rest for a moment, for with freedom comes responsibilities, and I dare not linger. For my long walk is not ended.”

As the South African High Commission, we fully embrace the launch of this Research Institute, which is undoubtedly destined to provide a pedestal for the cutting edge research in the Pacifica.

Vinaka.

Merci beaucoup.

I thank you.