

**Opening remarks by H. E. Sibongiseni Dlamini-Mntambo at the
Commemoration of the Centenary of Nelson Mandela, Ottawa, 13
November 2018**

The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney,
Deputy Minister Ian Shugart,
Special guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning, Sanibonani, bonjour, goeie more.

Deputy Minister Shugart, the South African High Commission is indeed humbled by Global Affairs Canada's continued friendship and support. This event, in honour of Nelson Mandela, South Africa's first democratically elected president was made possible because of the excellent collaboration the High Commission enjoyed with both Global Affairs Canada and the Institute of African Studies, Carlton University.

Before calling the Right Honourable Mulroney to the stage, I would like take a few minutes to reflect on what today means for us South Africans.

Ladies and gentlemen, I first met Nelson Mandela in 1992. He was turning 74, and the company I was working for at the time was hosting him for a birthday celebration. As part of their marketing team, I was provided a minute or two to greet him and share a few words. I had a camera in hand, but when the time came, we shook hands, and then... I froze. Nothing escaped my mouth. Not one word.

I have often thought back to that day, thinking of all the things I could have said to him. But now I think it was almost poetic that no words were said. There are simply, not enough words to describe what Nelson Mandela, our *Madiba*, meant to us. What could I, an ordinary South African, say to a man who would later become our president. What do you say to a man who not only freed us of humiliation and oppression, but who – through his example of forgiveness - also freed us of the weight of anger and vengeance? What words summarise gratitude for the sacrifices he and his family endured for decades? Which word captures the magnitude of the example he was and continues to be today?

For a black person, South Africa during apartheid was a terrible place to be. Some would say living through such a crime against humanity would be “unimaginable”. But for us, it’s not unimaginable. We were there.

We lived it. We experienced the evilness of the oppression. When we see echoes of apartheid surfacing in corners of the world today, we can only wish Madiba was still here. But he is gone. The theme for this year's Nelson Mandela centenary is "Be the Legacy". Nelson Mandela is gone. He will not come back to prevent policies like apartheid from returning to the world. That burden rests on today's world leaders, and ordinary women and men in civil society, academia and the private sector. We now *all* need to embody the example of Madiba. We now need to be his legacy.

INTRODUCING PM MULRONEY

Ladies and gentlemen, it is now my profound honour to call on one of Madiba's trusted global friends. The Right Honourable Brian Mulroney needs no introduction to Canadians, so instead I thought I would remind the audience of how important friends like Prime Minister Mulroney were to the liberation of South Africa. So important were his contributions that South Africa awarded him the Order of the Companion of OR Tambo in Gold in 2015. The following were among the words read out that evening *<and I quote>*:

"Brian Mulroney's role in the fight against apartheid while in office as Prime Minister of Canada contributed immensely to South Africa's

liberation struggle. His leadership on the international stage against South Africa's apartheid regime had been impressive. From 1985, Mulroney spearheaded an aggressive Canadian push within the Commonwealth for sanctions to pressure the racist South African government to end apartheid and release Mandela from prison where he had been locked up for a quarter century.

After his release from prison in 1990, Mandela rejected vengeance, ended apartheid as national leader, and was transformed into a global icon for peace and tolerance. But in the 1980s, when he needed foreign friends the most, it was Mulroney's Canadian Government that led the way. Mandela never forgot it." <end quote>

With that, ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the Right Honourable Brian Mulroney to the stage.

(As Tanya indicated), he will be joined on stage by Professor Fen Hampson.

Over to you, Professor.