

## **Oration at The National Orders Ceremony**

Union Buildings, Tshwane, 26 April 2005

In the name of the people, welcome to the Union Buildings, the seat of government.

This ceremony is convened to admit into the ranks of the Order of the Baobab, the Order of Luthuli, the Order of the Companions of O R Tambo and the Order of Mapungubwe, men and women who deserve high tribute for what they have done. Coming from many parts of the world, they have enriched our lives and made it possible for our diverse nation to proclaim itself part of the ancient and humane tradition of ubuntu.

This is the fifth time that our free people have had occasion to salute in humble gratitude such distinguished men and women who are, indeed, the stars on our national firmament. Today they are admitted into the ranks of those who belong to the National Orders of our Republic.

Because of their efforts, we are able to live and develop in a world of freedom, without the fetters of oppression or exclusion.

The honours that we bestow today tell the story of what and who we are, of what and who we shall be. These are our National Orders, the symbols that represent the nobility of human endeavour, constituting a hall of fame that will, today, be enriched by new and distinguished members.

We are especially pleased since we are able to admit these members into the ranks of Members of the National Orders as our Second Decade of Freedom unfolds in a spirit of optimism and celebration.

We have convened today at the seat of government, the Union Buildings, to admit some among us into the Order of the Baobab. These are compatriots who, without discrimination and at great cost to themselves, have rendered exceptional service to the people of South Africa, far beyond the call of duty.

They have acted like the Baobab colossus given to us by the natural world which has served the people through the millennia.

We have convened today at the seat of government, the Union Buildings, to admit some among us into the Order of Luthuli. These have made an immense contribution to the realisation of our long-standing desire for a free, democratic, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa.

All of them have sacrificed much, as Chief Albert Luthuli did, so that their compatriots can satisfy the natural human yearning to live, grow and develop into a society free of oppression, racism and bigotry.

We have convened today at the seat of government, the Union Buildings, to admit our friends from the rest of the world into the Order of the Companions of O R Tambo.

These are citizens of other countries, who, without discrimination and at great cost to themselves, their countries and peoples, have made an exceptional contribution to the efforts of the people of South Africa to define themselves as human beings, towards which objective Oliver Reginald Tambo devoted his whole life.

We have convened today at the seat of government, the Union Buildings, to admit an exceptional person to the Order of Mapungubwe. This is a person whose activities cannot but be described as excellent.

He is a man who dared to act outside the boundaries of the ordinary, taking upon himself the skill and daring of the majestic bird which stands on permanent guard to protect the nation. Her wings commune

with the beams of the rising sun on our Coat of Arms, as the people of Mapungubwe conversed with nature, the peoples of the universe, and the world of creative thought.

These distinguished members of our National Orders are the guardians of ubuntu, handmaidens of our liberty, and defenders of a shared human destiny. They stand as beacons that must guide us forever as we build a society founded on the high ideals of freedom, justice, equality and human solidarity.

For all time, these men and women are admitted as esteemed members of these Orders, subject to the precedence and authority of our National Anthem, our National Flag, and our National Coat of Arms, which represent the highest symbolic repositories of our common nationhood.

The lifetime contributions of the heroes and heroines who are the principals of today's National Orders ceremony light our way as we advance to the better world that is being born.

Their footprints are the inspiring signposts that indicate our route of march, even for generations that have still to emerge out of the distant mists of future time.

We are especially blessed that this ceremony permits us to share an encounter with the honoured Members of the National Orders who are alive. And we are especially privileged that this ceremony brings us into communion with the noble souls of the honoured Members of the National Orders who have departed from the world of the living.

To them all, the living and the dead, on this day, the nation says -bayethe!

On this day, let all citizens and patriots proclaim:

Glory to the Honoured Members of the National Orders!

God bless Africa!

Save her children!

Grant her peace!