

**SPEAKING NOTES FOR DEPUTY MINISTER OF JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES THABANG MAKWETLA AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF AN ART GALLERY IN KLERKSDORP ON 21 JUNE 2016**

- *(General salutation or acknowledgement of the special guests and the audience)*
- This month bears great significance in the history of South Africa, as during the years of struggle for freedom, a series of defining actions were taken that paved the way for the total liberation of the people of South Africa in general and black people in particular. Standing out has been the role of young people in defying gun-wielding apartheid police to demand their rights as students and their rejection of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in schools.
- As well captured by the South African History Organisation, “in-discriminate use of firearms by the police” left hundreds of young people dead, as well as thousands injured and maimed. This marked a turning point following the banning of liberation organisations and the launch of the guerrilla warfare under the leadership of the African National Congress. This marked the beginning of internal mass revolt which reached its peak in the late 1980s.
- It is also today in 1989 that Me Walter Sisulu led a Federation of South African Women (FEDSAW) to address an anti-apartheid rally in London, calling for intensification of sanctions against the apartheid government, whose policies and brutality were described as an affront to humanity. It is also on this day that the President of the African National Congress, uNtshona Nelson Mandela, announced the cancellation of CODESA talks with the government following the brutal killing of people in Boipatong by government-aligned armed groups.
- Sharing this information is a critical element of educating the South African people especially youth and many born-frees, that FREEDOM WAS NOT FREE – it was paid for with the blood of hundreds of predominantly young South Africans that said enough is enough of apartheid repression. That is why we are gathered today and this month to pay tribute to the heroes and

heroines of the Class of 1976, who started a sprawling mass defiance action in Soweto, that spread across the country.

- It is in this context that Correctional Services, in collaboration with the North West Department of Arts and Culture, as well as Matlosana Municipality, have joined hands to open an Art Gallery of offenders' artwork in this museum, that itself was a prison.
- We are grateful to our partners, the Department of Arts and Culture as well as the Matlosana Municipality for their contribution in making this dream a reality. The dream is to showcase best practices of paintings and art work produced by offenders, as part of the rehabilitation programme, to the public and stakeholders. This is expected to serve as a platform to inspire current and ex-offenders to optimally utilise their talents to produce art works that would be compelling for any viewer and buyer. This outlet will also help boost the interest of young people of this area, to harness their talents and gifts, to mainstream art in the broader socio-economic development.
- Currently the Department of Correctional is finalising a new policy framework for the sale of large stocks of original paintings and artwork of thousands of offenders nationally. The framework makes a provision for the sale of art to the public and for use of income (i.e. one-third) to restock input materials used in correctional centres to train and coach other offenders, the second portion will be used for ploughing back to crime affected communities and victims, and the last portion will be used by the offender – artist as a start-up capital when released or placed on parole.
- We have noted with great concern a significant increase in a number of crime categories in this area. These include murders by 13.9% and drug related crimes by 124% between 2008 and 2015. Although there is some decline in assaults with an intention to cause grievous bodily harm and common assaults by 35% and 85% respectively, the increase of commercial crimes in a worrying factor. We believe this art gallery will made a contribution, nor matter how small, in rekindling hope for a better life for young people.

- The Institute for Security Studies says the age group 12 to 22 is the most affected, as victims and perpetrators of crimes. The report says 69% of deaths from assaults, come from this segment of our society. This cannot be accepted and every effort must be done to down manage these crime patterns, so that our young ones can lead better and safer lives. That is one of the reasons we identified Kanana for an anti-crime imbizo this afternoon. We need to listen to young people speaking on these matters of crime and their development, so that our collective interventions can be able to scratch where it matters most.
- The launch of this Art Gallery, is part of a broader rehabilitation centred correctional system, that is outlined in our founding documents of democracy: from the Freedom Charter of 1955 where we said incarceration would be for re-education, our constitution signed into law by President Nelson Mandela 20 years ago - that entrenched human rights in our system, Correctional Services Act of 1998, and the White Paper on Corrections of 2005.
- Arts as a rehabilitation tool, enables offenders to better express their inner most feelings, which itself is healing. Art also affirms a sense of self-worth, when the world celebrates and appreciates your own production. Art also forms part of a growing creative industry, which has reached an unprecedented R90 billion contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in South Africa. With the phenomenal growth of the middle class in South Africa and the rate of tourists, the potential of creative arts continues to grow. We need to position offenders, ex-offenders and the youth of Matlosana, to reap the best benefits of this growth. For example, this Museum received unprecedented 16 000 visitors last year, and is growing.
- This is just the beginning, and this centre will serve as an inspiration and a point of mobilising many philanthropic expert artists, who may volunteer to train inmates and young people visiting this art gallery on how to harness their God given talents. We urge everyone to join hands with us, to multiply our capacity to train offenders and the youth to produce more and better products.

- As well articulated in our collective pledge to be signed today, we are agreeing to lead the community through heightened collaboration to fully promote the artistic potential of our young people, and to advance second chances for our offenders. We know that young people have the energy, creativity and innovative ideas to take this humble beginning to a higher development path. This should be a hive of economic activity, contributing to the growing numbers of annual visitors, and as fountain of wisdom and inspiration to even those that have long left our high walls.
- We must also treat this as the beginning of a broader expansion of access to art centres, building on the existing 160 arts and culture centres spearheaded by the National Department of Arts and Culture. As Correctional Services, we are planning to ensure that these galleries are established in 37 management areas across the country. With this model of partnership with North West Department of Arts and Culture as well as the Matlosana Municipality, the initially impossible looking target, looks really possible.
- This initiative will, undoubtedly make a significant contribution in our nation building project and social cohesion. Art knows no colour nor creed, art transcends language and cultural barriers, art unites people and we therefore expect this Art Gallery to play its part in promoting social cohesion in Matlosana and in the Dr Kenneth Kaunda Municipalities.
- Our doors are open for those inspired to make a contribution to this cause, to get in touch with the Department. One is eyeing even Business Arts South Africa, which can help improve the business of art in our endeavours.
- In conclusion, gratitude should be in order, to all organisers of this important project and event, including our partners, and all those who deemed it worthy of leaving every commitment they had, to grace this occasion.

**I thank you**