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## Media release

Pretoria, 22 October 2009

### **Che Guevara's daughter pays homage at Freedom Park to fallen Cuban freedom fighters**

On Saturday, 24 October 2009, at 10:00, Dr Aleida Guevara, daughter of the late freedom fighter, Ernesto Guevara de la Serna, popularly known as Che Guevara, visits Freedom Park. Che Guevara is one of the 30 leaders being honoured in the Gallery of Leaders at the Park. Saturday's function will see the presentation of an artwork on Che Guevara, which will ultimately form part of the permanent exhibition dedicated to him in the Gallery of Leaders.

Dr Guevara will also lay a wreath in honor of the Cuban freedom fighters who laid down their lives fighting for humanity and freedom in southern Africa. A total of 2,106 names of these Cuban heroes and heroines have been engraved on the Wall of Names within Freedom Park.

Che Guevara is one of the 30 leaders to be included in the Gallery of Leaders under the international leader category. The artwork to be presented is the first completed work to be included in the gallery. This 1m x 950mm photo collage on canvas will ultimately form part of the permanent exhibition on Che Guevara.

Dr Guevara, a leader in her own right, enjoyed a limited relationship with her father, given his commitment to liberation, not only of the Cuban people but also internationally. Despite her father being assassinated in October 1967 in Bolivia, Dr Guevara remains committed to the struggle for humanity and freedom, conscious of the atrocities committed against the people of the world.

"By including Che Guevara in the Gallery of Leaders, we pay tribute to his achievements as a human being, leader, freedom fighter and family man. He was truly one of those exceptional leaders who brought about qualitative leaps in the struggle for humanity and freedom internationally. It is an honor to have his daughter visit Freedom Park as we present the first

artwork to be included in the Gallery of Leaders – a work about her father,” says Dr Mongane W Serote, CEO of Freedom Park.

The Friends of Cuba Society (FOCUS) invited Dr Guevara and her brother, Camilo Guevara, to visit South Africa. The association between the people of South Africa and Cuba dates back many years. Dr Guevara’s visit to South Africa is in celebration of an exceptional year in Cuban-South African relations. This year marks the 50th anniversary of the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, the 15th anniversary of formal diplomatic relations between Cuba and South Africa and the 21st anniversary of the battle of Cuito Cuanavale in south-eastern Angola; a battle that changed the history and political landscape of the southern African region irreversibly.

The visit to South Africa will include interacting with South Africans on the gains of the Cuban revolution in the past 50 years regarding issues of health, education, social welfare, housing etc.

“Cuba’s involvement in Africa is a remarkable tale of selflessness, unconditional support and the invaluable contributions to the cause of freedom, justice and development which spans more than four decades and has involved 450,000 men and women.<sup>1</sup> 380,000 of these were combatants and the remaining 70,000 were civilian aid workers that included doctors, nurses and medical technicians<sup>2</sup>,” says Dr Serote.

The Freedom Park is an icon of humanity and freedom – not only for South Africans, but also internationally. The Park tells the story of a nation and its people subjected to the most brutal forms of infringement and abuse of basic human rights and thus provides a voice to the often untold history of South Africa and its people. More importantly, the Park weaves a tale of inspiration. It provides proof of what we can achieve and shows what we are capable of as a nation. It acts as a signpost to the future of South Africa.

Mindful of our past and the manner in which it shapes our present and future, we believe it imperative to remember and honour those who came to our aid during our time of need. On Monday, 04 September 2006, Freedom Park hosted a ceremony during which a journal containing the names of 2,106 Cuban soldiers who died in Southern Africa fighting for freedom and humanity, were handed over to the Cuban Ambassador. The names of these Cuban heroes and heroines are also inscribed on the Wall of Names alongside their South African comrades who died during the

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<sup>1</sup> Fidel Castro Ruz, ‘Speech to the Mass Rally at Mandela Park, Kingston, Jamaica’, 30 July 1998, p9; and Jorge Risquet Valdés, *Two Centuries of Solidarity: The Deep Roots of Cuba’s Internationalism*, in <http://www.tricontinental.cubaweb.cu/revista>, (site visited on 18 October 2006).

<sup>2</sup> Risquet, *Two Centuries of Solidarity*, Part XI.

various conflicts in South Africa's history and honour of their brave contribution to the establishment of democracy and liberation in our country.

To date, 30 leaders have been researched for inclusion in the Gallery of Leaders under the South African, continental and international categories. This research process is ongoing and more names will be included. The public can submit their thoughts and suggestions on the included leaders to [info@freedompark.co.za](mailto:info@freedompark.co.za).

ENDS

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