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## Media release

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### **President Zuma to deliver Day of Reconciliation address from Freedom Park**

Today South African State President, Mr Jacob Zuma, visits Freedom Park, from where he will deliver his Day of Reconciliation address to the nation. Other high level attendees include the Minister of Arts and Culture, Ms Lulu Xingwana, the Premier of Gauteng, Ms Nomvula Paula Mokonyane, the MEC of the Gauteng Department of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture, Ms Nelisiwe Mbatha Mtimkulu, and the Executive Mayor of the Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality, Dr Gwen Ramokgopa.

This celebration comprises two main parts. The first is a culmination of the cleansing and healing process that Freedom Park engaged in during the past year with the traditional leaders who were on the frontline during the pre-colonial era. These pre-dawn inter-faith rituals start at 03:30 in Isivivane. The second, which includes President Zuma's address to the nation, entails a partnership with the Gauteng Department of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture to pay tribute to Gauteng military struggle veterans. Starting at 08:00, this takes place in S'khumbuto.

The first part of the event takes the form of an inter-faith cleansing and healing ceremony, which takes another step towards reconciliation and nation building for the following communities: the Nguni, Thonga, Vhangona, Vhatavhatsindi, Balobedu, Batlukwa, Khoi and San. This ceremony is the finale of a process started earlier this year, with a cleansing and healing ceremony conducted for these communities on 26 September 2009.

"These cleansing and healing ceremonies are employed as vehicles that allow these communities to revisit traumatic events of the past and to intercede with the ancestors and God to cleanse the pain and hurt caused by these events. In this way, the communities are launched on a route of

closure, and ultimately, the healing process,” says Dr M W Serote, Chief Executive Officer of Freedom Park.

“This specific cleansing and healing process engaged in with the Nguni, Thonga, Vhangona, Vhatavhatsindi, Balobedu, Batlukwa, Khoi and San communities are aimed at obtaining closure for pre-colonial conflicts as a way to set into motion and to support processes intended to eliminate tribalism in our communities, society and nation.”

This initiative came as a request from various communities throughout the nation, who felt that the South African nation is still divided along tribal lines. The cleansing and healing process enables members of the community to look back on the painful events that caused resulted in their history, their separation, resistance and events that disrupted their lives. These events eventually affected human relations, caused hatred, divisions, strife and destruction of properties. Cleansing and healing launches the communities on a new journey: a journey of healing memories and building new relationships.

Cleansing and healing is an age-old indigenous tradition practiced on individual, family and community level. In 2003, Freedom Park took the initiative to broaden this tradition to a national level to assist South Africa on its reconciliation and nation building route. Each ceremony forms part of a larger picture and touches on a specific part of the South African nation in a unique matter.

“In South Africa, much blood has been spilt in the attainment of freedom and peace. However, blood continues to be spilt through some of the senseless violent crimes taking place within our communities. Where such violence and pain saturates our past, something must be done to ask forgiveness from ancestors, prophets, saints and God as well as from the people who were harmed. This process not only leads to closure for those left behind, but also set the spirits of the victims free so that souls can rest in peace. This also gives us an opportunity to pray and intercede so that we are led by God and the ancestors to find ways of intervening and resolving these challenges facing our country,” says Dr Serote.

The cleansing and healing ceremonies also bring diverse communities together in an attempt to provide a platform for individuals to realise that they share similar experiences, a similar past and similar pain. In terms of reconciliation and nation building, this is a pivotal realisation that will allow all South Africans to embrace each other as diverse brothers and sisters. This event is also in line with the United Nation’s declaration of 2009 as the International Year of Reconciliation.

The second part of the programme entails a partnership with the Gauteng Department of Sports, Recreation, Arts and Culture to honour military Struggle veterans from Gauteng. During this event, the Premier of Gauteng will pay respects to these veterans and bestow on each a token of gratitude and honour for their selfless sacrifice. The names of approximately 100 veterans who have already passed away will also be handed over to Freedom Park for verification and inscription on the Wall of Names.

Honouring the Gauteng military veterans forms part of a larger project, which will entail launching a desk for these veterans within the province. This desk will be responsible for recognising, honouring and commemorating the role that military veterans played in the advancement of democracy and freedom in South Africa.

“It is a tragic reality that many of the brave men and women who sacrificed their time, opportunities, energy and often their lives for liberation have not received the recognition that they deserve. Moreover, many of our veterans are unemployed and thus subjected to a life of poverty in the country that they sacrificed so greatly for. It is against this background that the first step of showing our veterans the necessary respect and recognition takes place on the Day of Reconciliation,” says Dr Serote.

Issued by Freedom Park

For further information:

Ilse Posselt

Public Relations

Tel +27 (0)12 336 4000

Fax +27 (0)12 336 4021

Mobile +27 (0)79 515 3371

ilse@freedompark.co.za