

**COVER
STORY**

**Reflecting on 30 Years of Democracy:
Former President Thabo Mbeki's Address**

30 Years Freedom Launch

Celebrating Youth Month at Freedom Park

Freedom Park's Participation at Key EXPOs

A photograph of former President Thabo Mbeki speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark blue suit, a light blue shirt, and a striped tie. He is looking down at papers on the podium. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with trees.

30 Years of Freedom



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Editor's Note

As we step into the first quarter of 2024, it's a time to reflect on South Africa's ongoing journey—30 years into democracy. The articles in this issue of Freedom Park's quarterly magazine invite us to consider the milestones reached, the challenges that persist, and the opportunities ahead as we uphold the principles of freedom, dignity, and unity.

This year, we highlight a comparison between the 1994 and 2024 elections, reminding us that while democracy empowers us to shape our future, as former President Thabo Mbeki noted, political freedom was only the beginning. The ongoing struggle for economic justice, social cohesion, and equality remains critical to realizing democracy's full potential. Issues such as inequality, unemployment, and corruption must be addressed with urgency.

Additionally, Freedom Park's participation in expos like the World Travel Market and Durban Tourism Indaba amplifies our role as a custodian of South Africa's cultural heritage. These events are about more than visibility—they reflect our commitment to preserving the legacy of freedom fighters while fostering global connections.

Our youth initiatives, particularly the celebration of Youth Day and involvement in the National Youth Day Careers and Opportunities Expo, highlight our dedication to empowering the next generation. These initiatives not only honour Youth Day's historical significance but also offer today's youth a platform to shape tomorrow's narrative.

As you explore this issue, reflect on our nation's progress and the work still ahead. Freedom Park remains a place of healing and growth, where the stories of our past inform the future.

Console Tleane
HOD: Corporate Services



CEO's Foreword

As we begin 2024 and celebrate the first quarter, we are reminded of how the past continues to shape our present and future. At Freedom Park, we honour those who fought for freedom while inspiring new generations to uphold the values that sustain our democracy.

This quarter marks 30 years of democracy, offering a moment to reflect on South Africa's journey since 1994. Comparing the elections of 1994 and 2024 brings to light ongoing challenges, such as addressing economic inequality and ensuring the sustainability of democratic gains. Yet, the essence of democracy remains unchanged: the power of the people to shape their future.

Former President Thabo Mbeki's reflections remind us that while we have made significant strides, the quest for freedom, justice, and equality continues.

In this edition, you'll read about Freedom Park's participation in global and local expos, our efforts to increase visibility, and our deep engagement with youth through events like Youth Day and the National Youth Day Careers & Opportunities Expo. These initiatives emphasize our commitment to ensuring that the legacy of our past informs the future we are building—where young people are empowered to lead.

At Freedom Park, we believe heritage evolves. Our role is to facilitate healing, remembrance, and the creation of new narratives that unify our diverse nation.

I hope this edition inspires you with the resilience of our people and the enduring strength of our democracy. Together, we will continue to honour the past while shaping a brighter future.

Dr. Jane Mufamadi
Chief Executive Officer



Reflecting on 30 Years of Democracy:

Former President Thabo Mbeki's Address

As South Africa commemorates three decades of democracy, the significance of this milestone cannot be overstated. The journey from apartheid to a democratic state was fraught with sacrifice, struggle, and immense effort. It is against this backdrop that former President Thabo Mbeki delivered a profound and reflective address, offering a candid assessment of the nation's achievements and the challenges that remain.

In his address, Mbeki began by acknowledging the remarkable progress South Africa has made since 1994. The first democratic elections marked the end of decades of racial segregation and oppression under apartheid, ushering in a new era of political freedom. This transition was monumental, not only for South Africa but also for the global community, as it symbolized the triumph of justice over tyranny and the establishment of a society based on equality, dignity, and human rights.

Mbeki highlighted the establishment of democratic institutions as one of the most significant achievements of the past 30 years. These institutions, including the Constitutional Court, the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), and various Chapter 9 institutions, have played a crucial role in safeguarding democracy

and ensuring that the principles enshrined in the Constitution are upheld. The resilience and independence of these institutions, Mbeki noted, are a testament to the strength of South Africa's democratic framework.

Moreover, the peaceful transition of power in multiple elections over the past three decades stands as a hallmark of the nation's political maturity. Each election has reaffirmed the people's right to choose their leaders, reinforcing the idea that power resides with the citizens, not with those who hold office. This is a critical aspect of democracy that Mbeki emphasized—the need for elected leaders to be accountable to the people and to govern in a manner that reflects the will and aspirations of the electorate.

Reflecting on 30 Years of Democracy

(continued)

While Mbeki celebrated these achievements, he also turned his attention to the pressing challenges that continue to hinder South Africa's progress. He spoke with urgency and concern about the issues of economic inequality, unemployment, and corruption—problems that have persisted despite the political gains of the past 30 years.

Economic Inequality

Mbeki pointed out that while political freedom was achieved, economic freedom remains elusive for many South Africans. The deep-seated inequalities that characterized the apartheid era have not been fully addressed, leaving a large portion of the population marginalized. The gap between the rich and the poor has, in some cases, widened, creating a society where wealth and opportunity are still unevenly distributed.

Land reform, economic empowerment, and access to quality education and healthcare were identified by Mbeki as critical areas where progress has been slow. He argued that without significant advances in these areas, the promise of democracy would remain unfulfilled for many South Africans. The failure to address these issues, he warned, could lead to social unrest and undermine the stability of the nation.

Unemployment

Mbeki also highlighted the alarmingly high unemployment rates, particularly among the youth. He expressed concern that the lack of job opportunities is not only a source of economic strain but also a threat to social cohesion. Young people, who make up most of the population, are becoming increasingly disillusioned with the lack of opportunities available to them. This disillusionment, Mbeki noted, could lead to a loss of faith in the democratic system and a rise in anti-democratic sentiments.

To tackle unemployment, Mbeki called for more robust policies aimed at job creation, skills development, and entrepreneurship. He emphasized the need for government, private sector, and civil society to work together to create an environment that fosters economic growth and provides opportunities for all citizens, particularly the youth.

Corruption

Perhaps one of the most critical issues Mbeki addressed was the pervasive corruption that has plagued various levels of government and public institutions. Corruption, he argued, is a cancer that eats away at the fabric of society, eroding trust in public institutions and undermining the rule of law. Mbeki was unequivocal in his condemnation of corruption, stating that it is one of the greatest threats to South Africa's democracy.

He called for a renewed commitment to transparency, accountability, and good governance, urging leaders to lead by example and to root out corruption wherever it is found. Mbeki also stressed the importance of a strong and independent judiciary, capable of holding those in power accountable, and of a free press that can expose wrongdoing without fear of reprisal.

In his address, Mbeki urged the current leadership and citizens alike to recommit to the principles that guided the liberation struggle—justice, equality, and social cohesion. These principles, he argued, must continue to guide the nation's development and inform the policies and actions of its leaders.

Justice

Mbeki emphasized that true justice goes beyond legal and political rights; it encompasses social and economic justice as well. He called for a concerted effort to address the systemic inequalities that persist in society, particularly in areas such as land ownership, education, and healthcare. Justice, in Mbeki's view, also means ensuring that all citizens can participate fully in the economy and to enjoy the benefits of economic growth.

Equality

The former president spoke passionately about the need to achieve greater equality in South Africa. He pointed out that while legal equality has been achieved, substantive equality—equality in terms of access to resources, opportunities, and outcomes—remains a distant goal for many. Mbeki called on the government to prioritize policies that promote economic equality and social inclusion, particularly for historically disadvantaged communities.

Reflecting on 30 Years of Democracy

(continued)

Social Cohesion

Mbeki also highlighted the importance of social cohesion in building a united and prosperous nation. He warned that the growing disparities between rich and poor, urban and rural, and different racial and ethnic groups pose a serious threat to national unity. To counter this, Mbeki advocated for policies and programs that promote social integration, mutual respect, and a shared sense of national identity.

He also urged citizens to engage in active citizenship, to participate in community and national development, and to hold their leaders accountable. Mbeki's message was clear: the future of South Africa's democracy depends on the active participation and commitment of all its citizens.

Mbeki's speech was not only a celebration of the progress made over the past 30 years but also a sobering reminder of the work that still lies ahead. He emphasized that democracy is not a destination but a journey, one that requires constant vigilance, dedication, and effort.



Building an Inclusive Economy

One of the key challenges identified by Mbeki is the need to build an inclusive economy that benefits all South Africans. He called for a more equitable distribution of wealth and resources, and for policies that prioritize the needs of the poor and marginalized. Mbeki stressed that economic inclusion is essential for social stability and for the sustainability of South Africa's democracy.

He also highlighted the importance of education and skills development in achieving economic inclusion. Mbeki argued that without access to quality education and training, young people will continue to be excluded from the economy, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality.

Strengthening Democratic Institutions

Mbeki also spoke about the need to strengthen South Africa's democratic institutions. He praised the role these institutions have played in upholding the Constitution and protecting the rights of citizens but warned that they must be constantly defended against threats such as corruption and political interference.

Mbeki called for greater support for institutions such as the judiciary, the electoral commission, and the media, which he described as the guardians of democracy. He also emphasized the importance of civil society in holding government accountable and in promoting transparency and good governance.

Reflecting on 30 Years of Democracy

(continued)



Fostering National Security

In his conclusion, Mbeki spoke about the importance of fostering national unity. He acknowledged that South Africa’s diversity is one of its greatest strengths but warned that it can also be a source of division if not managed carefully. Mbeki called for efforts to promote dialogue and understanding between different communities, and for policies that address the root causes of social and economic divisions.

He also urged South Africans to reject the politics of division and to embrace the values of solidarity, mutual respect, and common purpose. Mbeki’s vision for the future of South Africa is one of a united, prosperous, and just society, where all citizens have the opportunity to thrive.

As South Africa marks 30 years of democracy, Thabo Mbeki’s address serves as a powerful reminder of both the achievements and the challenges that define this milestone. While there is much to celebrate, Mbeki’s message is clear: the work of building a just, equal, and united South Africa is far from complete.

His call to action resonates with the ongoing struggles faced by the nation—economic inequality, unemployment, and corruption—and underscores the need for renewed commitment to the principles that guided the liberation struggle. Mbeki’s vision for the future is one that requires the collective effort of all South Africans, leaders and citizens alike, to realize the true promise of freedom and prosperity for all.

As we reflect on three decades of democracy, Mbeki’s words inspire us to continue striving toward a society where justice, equality, and social cohesion are not just ideals, but realities for every South African. The journey is far from over, but with determination and unity, the goal of a truly democratic and inclusive nation is within reach. 🇿🇦





Reflecting on this year's general elections: 2024 vs 1994

As we mark another pivotal election year in South Africa, it's impossible not to draw comparisons with the first democratic elections of 1994. That historic moment, 30 years ago, was characterized by unparalleled enthusiasm and a collective sense of hope. The nation stood on the precipice of a new era, with millions casting their ballots for the first time, ending decades of apartheid rule. The long queues, vibrant celebrations, and the overwhelming turnout were a testament to the thirst for freedom and equality.

Fast forward to 2024, and while the spirit of democracy remains intact, the landscape has evolved significantly. Today's voters are more diverse and informed, with different expectations shaped by three decades of democratic governance. The challenges of 2024 are also different—where 1994 was about breaking chains and building a new nation, today's focus is on addressing economic inequalities, social justice, and the sustainability of the democratic gains made since that watershed moment.

Yet, in both 1994 and 2024, the core principle remains the same: the power of the people to shape their future. As we reflect on this year's elections, we are reminded of the sacrifices and struggles that paved the way for a democratic South Africa. The journey from 1994 to 2024 is a testament to the resilience and determination of the South African people to uphold the values of freedom, dignity, and democracy.

Freedom Park, as a custodian of our nation's heritage, continues to honour the legacy of those who fought for these democratic rights. As we look to the future, let us remember that each vote cast is not just a mark on a ballot paper, but a continuation of the journey started in 1994—a journey that remains as important today as it was three decades ago. 🇿🇦

National Youth Day Careers & Opportunities Expo

In celebration of Youth Day, Freedom Park took an active role in the National Youth Day Careers & Opportunities Expo, reaffirming its commitment to empowering the youth of South Africa. This participation aligns with the park's broader mission of fostering social cohesion, promoting national heritage, and ensuring that the sacrifices of the past inform the opportunities of the future.



Youth Day, observed on June 16th, holds deep historical significance in South Africa. It commemorates the 1976 Soweto Uprising, when thousands of students took to the streets to protest the apartheid regime's oppressive education policies. Their courage and sacrifice became a turning point in South Africa's struggle for freedom and equality. Today, Youth Day serves as a reminder of the power of young people to effect change and the ongoing need to address the

challenges they face, particularly in education, employment, and empowerment.

Freedom Park's participation in the National Youth Day Careers & Opportunities Expo was a natural extension of its role as a custodian of South Africa's heritage and a champion for youth development. The park's involvement was driven by a desire to inspire and equip young people with the tools they need to build a prosperous future.

Recognizing that today's youth are tomorrow's leaders, Freedom Park sought to engage with them meaningfully, offering guidance, support, and inspiration.

At the expo, Freedom Park's exhibit was a hub of activity, attracting students, graduates, and young professionals eager to explore career opportunities and learn more about South Africa's rich cultural heritage.

The park's team engaged attendees in conversations about the importance of preserving and promoting national heritage, highlighting the various career paths available in fields related to history, culture, and heritage management.

One of the key messages conveyed by Freedom Park at the expo was the importance of understanding and connecting with the past to build a better future. The park emphasized how knowledge of South Africa's history, especially the contributions and sacrifices of young people in the fight for freedom, is crucial for shaping the country's future leaders. By understanding their heritage, today's youth can draw inspiration and strength from those who came before them, using that knowledge to overcome present-day challenges.

In addition to providing information about career opportunities, Freedom Park also showcased its educational programs and initiatives aimed at young people. These programs are designed to instill a sense of pride and responsibility in the youth, encouraging them to take an active role in preserving their heritage and contributing to nation-building. The park's team emphasized how careers in heritage and culture can be both fulfilling and impactful, offering a unique way to contribute to the country's social fabric.



Freedom Park's participation in the expo also included workshops and interactive sessions where young attendees could gain practical skills and insights into various career paths. These sessions were aimed at empowering the youth with knowledge about the different opportunities available to them, from internships and training programs to full-time careers in the heritage sector. The park's representatives shared personal experiences and success stories, offering guidance on how to navigate the challenges of starting a career and the importance of perseverance and passion.

The National Youth Day Careers & Opportunities Expo provided an ideal platform for Freedom Park to engage with the youth of South Africa, reinforcing its commitment to youth development and empowerment. By connecting the past with the future and offering practical opportunities for growth, Freedom Park continues to play a vital role in shaping the next generation of South Africans. Through its participation in events like this, the park not only honours the legacy of Youth Day but also ensures that the sacrifices of the past continue to inspire and empower the youth of today 🇿🇦





Celebrating Youth Month

During Youth Month, Freedom Park was thrilled to invite everyone to join in a day of celebration, reflection, and inspiration. As we honored the brave young souls who shaped our history, we created an opportunity for today's youth to connect with their heritage and each other in a meaningful and memorable way.

Families and friends marked their calendars and gathered for a fantastic day out at Freedom Park's iconic amphitheatre. Free entry was offered to all youth under 35 years old—a gesture of appreciation for the younger generation's role in shaping the future of our nation. Whether attendees were history buffs, movie lovers, or simply looking for a relaxing day outdoors, there was something for everyone.

Picnic in the Park

Many packed their picnic baskets, grabbed blankets, and headed over to the amphitheatre for a day of outdoor fun. The picturesque setting of Freedom Park provided the perfect backdrop for a laid-back picnic with loved ones. As they enjoyed their meals, visitors took in the beauty of the park and the significance of the space, which stands as a testament to our nation's journey to freedom.

Documentary Screenings

As part of the celebration, a selection of powerful documentaries was screened, highlighting the role of youth in the struggle for freedom. These films were not only educational but also deeply moving, offering insights into the courage, resilience, and determination of young people throughout our history. The screenings provided a perfect way to reflect on the past while enjoying a day in the park.

Freedom Park's involvement extended beyond commemorating the past—it was also about empowering the future. To celebrate Youth Day, we proudly participated in the National Youth Day Careers & Opportunities Expo. Our involvement in this event underscored our commitment to providing today's youth with the tools, knowledge, and inspiration they need to build a better future.

Engaging with Youth at the Expo

At the expo, we connected with young South Africans, offering insights into the various career opportunities available within the heritage and cultural sectors. We also shared information about our educational programs, designed to inspire and equip young people

with the skills they need to succeed. The expo served as an exciting platform for us to engage with the youth, listen to their aspirations, and encourage them to explore careers that not only fulfill them personally but also contribute to the preservation and promotion of our national heritage.

Workshops and Interactive Session

We also hosted workshops and interactive sessions during the expo, where participants gained practical advice on career development, networking, and skills-building. These sessions were designed to be both informative and inspiring, helping young people navigate the challenges of entering the workforce and finding their path in life.

Youth Month was a time to honour the past while looking forward to the future. At Freedom Park, we created a space where young people could learn, grow, and enjoy themselves in a setting steeped in history and significance. Whether they came for the documentaries, the camaraderie, or just a day out in the sun, we were delighted to welcome everyone to Freedom Park for this special celebration. 🇿🇦



Freedom Park's Participation in Key Expos

In its continued efforts to bolster visibility, engagement, and relevance within the tourism sector, Freedom Park has actively participated in three major expos this year: the World Travel Market (WTM), the Durban Tourism Indaba, and the Two Oceans Marathon Expo. These events have provided invaluable platforms to showcase Freedom Park's unique offerings, foster partnerships, and promote its significance as a cultural and heritage destination in South Africa

World Travel Market: Showcasing South Africa's Heritage on a Global Stage

The World Travel Market (WTM) is one of the most influential global events in the tourism calendar. Attended by thousands of industry professionals, media, and travel enthusiasts, WTM offers an unparalleled opportunity for networking, business development, and marketing. Freedom Park's participation in WTM was strategic, aimed at enhancing its international visibility and attracting a global audience to South Africa's rich heritage narrative.

At WTM, Freedom Park presented itself not just as a museum but as a dynamic space that embodies the story of South Africa's journey to democracy. The team emphasized the Park's role in fostering social cohesion, healing, and reconciliation through its diverse offerings, including guided tours, educational programs, and special events. Engaging with international tour operators and media representatives, Freedom Park laid the groundwork for future collaborations, especially in markets that have shown a growing interest in cultural and heritage tourism.

Durban Tourism Indaba: Strengthening Local Partnerships

The Durban Tourism Indaba, Africa's largest tourism marketing event, is another crucial platform where Freedom Park made its presence felt. With the focus on intra-Africa travel and boosting the continent's tourism industry, the Indaba presented an excellent opportunity for Freedom Park to strengthen relationships with local and regional stakeholders.

During the Indaba, Freedom Park highlighted its role in the broader South African tourism landscape, positioning itself as a key player in cultural tourism.



The emphasis was placed on its contribution to the national narrative, making it a must-visit site for both domestic and international tourists. The Park also explored potential partnerships with other heritage sites and cultural institutions, which could lead to collaborative efforts in promoting South Africa's rich and diverse heritage.

Two Oceans Marathon Expo: Reaching New Audiences

The Two Oceans Marathon Expo, held in Cape Town, is an annual event that attracts thousands of participants and spectators from around the world. This expo, though primarily sports-focused, provided a unique platform for Freedom Park to reach a different audience—one that may not traditionally engage with cultural and heritage sites.

Freedom Park's participation in the Two Oceans Marathon Expo was a strategic move to tap into the growing trend of combining sport with tourism.

The Park's exhibit highlighted the physical and symbolic journeys that parallel the marathon experience with South Africa's historical narrative of endurance and triumph. This approach resonated well with the marathon community, many of whom expressed interest in visiting the Park during their stay in South Africa or in future visits.

Freedom Park's participation in these key expos—World Travel Market, Durban Tourism Indaba, and the Two Oceans Marathon Expo—demonstrates a commitment to broadening its reach and impact. By strategically engaging with diverse audiences, from international tour operators to local tourism stakeholders and sports enthusiasts, Freedom Park continues to position itself as a vital component of South Africa's cultural and heritage tourism landscape. These efforts not only enhance the Park's visibility but also contribute to the broader goal of preserving and promoting South Africa's rich and complex history to the world. 🇿🇦



Highlights



Wreath Laying - His Excellency Salvador Valdés Mesa



Visit of Cuban President - His Excellency Salvador Valdés Mesa



Commemoration of the Battle of Cuito Caunavale



Wreath Laying - Cuito Caunavale



Celebrating 30 Years of Mandela's Speech



30 Year Anniversary of Mandela's Speech



Freedom Dialogue - Africa Month



Wreath Laying - Anzac Day

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