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## MEDIA RELEASE

### FREEDOM PARK TO HOST THE ANNUAL COMMEMORATION OF THE BATTLE OF CUITO CUANAVALLE, PRETORIA

*Pretoria, 20 March 2025* - The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DSAC), in partnership with its entities the Freedom Park Heritage Site and Museum, and the National Heritage Council of South Africa (NHC), shall host a Day of Reflection on Resistance and Liberation Heritage on Sunday, 23 March 2025, in commemoration of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale.

The event, which will take place at Freedom Park in Pretoria, will include a public lecture and wreath-laying ceremony, led by Minister Gayton McKenzie. The commemoration will be attended by ambassadors from Angola, Cuba, Namibia, and Russia, as well as representatives from other Southern African Development Community (SADC) nations.

Angola's Minister of Culture and Tourism, His Excellency Mr. Felipe Silva de Pina Za, is also expected to attend with a delegation.

This significant occasion aims to educate and create awareness about the legacy of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale, its importance in Southern Africa's liberation struggle, and its lasting impact on South Africa and Namibia's fight for freedom.

Fought in southern Angola between 1987 and 1988, the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale was one of the most decisive military engagements in Africa's liberation history. It played a critical role in strategically reshaping the narrative around apartheid South Africa's military incursion into the rest of Africa, paving the way for Namibia's independence, and significantly contributing to the eventual collapse of apartheid.

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Council Members: Ms. CV Adams-Kruger (Chairperson), Ms. BE Watson, Adv. C Naidoo, Prof. S Cooper, Mr. Z Gordon, Mr. SS Masemola, Mr. T Plaatjie, Ms. M Matli, Dr. J Mufamadi (CEO)

Dr Jane Mufamadi, CEO of Freedom Park, said: “The commemoration of the Battle of Cuito Cuanavale is more than a reflection on history – it is a tribute to international solidarity and the sacrifices that shaped the democratic South Africa we live in today,”.

This event will provide a platform for young people, researchers, and heritage practitioners to engage with the legacy of African-led resistance, reinforcing Freedom Park’s role as a space for dialogue, education, and remembrance.

“The shared heritage of solidarity, courage and freedom to free the respective people from colonialism and even in civil war, should be highlighted. Liberation heritage is about a living memorial initiative to recognise and honour those who sacrificed for freedom and built a better future for all of us”, said Dr Thabo Manetsi, CEO of the NHC.

Minister McKenzie said: “The Battle of Cuito Cuanavale and the Cuban intervention in Angola marked a turning point in Southern African history. The South African Defence Force was made to rethink the Border War after the battle, making it a historic milestone in the fight for the liberation of the region from apartheid and military aggression.”

The battle holds a prominent place in the Roads to Independence initiative, a UNESCO-recognised cultural heritage programme that traces the liberation struggles of South Africa and Namibia. At the 33rd UNESCO General Conference in 2005, and later at the 16th African Union Assembly in 2011, the initiative was expanded into the African Liberation Heritage Programme, reaffirming the continent’s commitment to preserving the memory of its fight for independence.

As part of this broader liberation heritage agenda, South Africa and Angola formalised their commitment to preserving this history through a bilateral Agreement and Programme of Cooperation (PoC), signed from 10 to 13 April 2018. This agreement proposed that 23 March be officially recognised as a Day of Reflection across all SADC countries, ensuring that the legacy of Cuito Cuanavale continues to inspire future generations.

### **For media inquiries:**

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