

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT DELIVERED BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NEVILLE
GERTZE, PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA TO
THE UNITED NATIONS, ON BEHALF OF THE SOUTHERN
AFRICA DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY (SADC)**

13 APRIL 2018

“How does one describe oneself? I leave that to my people to describe me...over the years, I have told you, over and over again, it has never been about me the person, I have never regarded myself as an individual, I’m just part of this whole Liberation Mission, I have never been an individual. I belong to the collective.” These are the words of Mam Winnie Madikizela-Mandela on being asked to describe herself and even when offered the chance to highlight her own contributions, she always spoke of the collective and of the people she was fighting for.

**Mr. Secretary General,
President of the General Assembly
Excellencies and Permanent Representatives
The people of South Africa who are present
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am honoured to deliver this statement on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC.) We would like to pay tribute and respect to a fallen heroine, Mrs. Winifred “Winnie” Nomzamo Madikizela-Mandela, who was a freedom fighter with a spirit that could not be conquered. The Liberation Movements across Southern Africa are still coming to terms with the loss of a struggle icon and an anti-apartheid campaigner, a woman who dedicated her life and that of her family for the liberation struggle in the Republic of South Africa from an early age and became affectionately known as "Mother of the Nation".

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Winnie Madikizela-Mandela’s fearless resistance to harassment, and her unapologetic resistance to apartheid, led to periods of imprisonment, which were often spent in solitary confinement. Despite these hardships, she emerged ever defiant and brimming with more determination to bring about change in the lives of her brothers and sisters in the country, and inspiring countless others in the SADC region.

Mrs. Madikizela-Mandela was the essence of black female defiance, against apartheid, oppression, racism and imperialism. At a time when women were still

seen as the “weaker sex”, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela’s strength, tenacity and spirit were the inspiring light that many in South Africa, and indeed in our region, in particular the frontline states of Angola, Botswana, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Zambia drew inspiration from. In the frontline states, her message reverberated through the transmission belt of migrant labour, and the underground political networks. We stood in solidarity with the people and struggle of South Africa and mobilized international pressure to bring down the racist regime.

Mama Winnie overcame apartheid and sexism to rise into the upper echelons of ANC leadership at a time many thought her star will dim with the imprisonment of Nelson Mandela. She was the embodiment of what we here at the United Nations call the Women, Peace and Security agenda; well before the historical resolution 1325 was introduced in the Security Council. That resolution speaks of the reality that women are not merely victims of conflict situations, but that they can and must play a role in conflict resolution, peace building and leadership in their communities. Long before the United Nations was talking about this, Winnie Mandela was leading a movement and inspiring countless women in SADC as well as across the world to take up the mantle of leadership.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It was notable that Mrs. Madikizela-Mandela never elevated herself above the people. In her own words, she said “I am the product of the masses of the country and the product of my enemy”. Mrs. Madikizela-Mandela spoke and fought for the defenseless and won. She has lived her purpose and was truly an inspiration to us all. She will be missed not only by those who were close to her, and not only by the nation that she loved deeply and served proudly, but also by millions of men, women and children who enjoy today’s freedom because of the dreams she pursued. Her influence reached the whole of SADC and the International arena, where she will be equally missed.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Her indomitable spirit could not be conquered, instead it ignited the flame of resistance in millions of young people inside the country and across borders in our

region and globally. A statement we have heard over and over in the past few weeks has been “Winnie did not die, she multiplied” and the youth of the region have been remembering her with this.

Her defiance of the repressive laws and practices of segregation, her struggles to free her country from the most pernicious system of oppression, emboldened student movements, anti-apartheid campaigners and movements in their fights for freedom and justice. Vivid in my mind as a young student, is the image of a fearless woman, clenched fist in the air leading in song, Senzenina, Senzenina, what have we done, or who can forget - Siyaya ePitoli, marching straight into the face of the Apartheid Security Forces, shouting No Justice, No Peace, An Injury to one is an Injury to all, Mayibuye, iAfrica - Bring back Africa, Amadla, Ngawethu - Power to the People.

Yes, indeed a stalwart of the liberation movement, an icon of the struggle, fearless leader, a giant in the fight for justice, freedom, the right to self-determination and human dignity; she was to all of us. Renowned South African Poet Mzwake Mbuli in his powerful tribute to Mama Winnie Mandela summed her character up in these beautiful words, "she was allergic to cowardice and addicted to freedom".

In his personal message to the family of Mama Winnie, H.E President Hage Geingob of Namibia tweeted: With the family, the people of South Africa, we are mourning the death of a freedom fighter, Comrade Winnie Madikizela-Mandela. Ma Winnie will be remembered as a symbol of a life of struggle for the oppressed people. President Geingob ends his tweet by crying out "Fighters never Die, They live on"

Mama Winnie, Mother of the Nation, Spear of the Nation, you have fought the good fight, you have finished the race, but your legacy will live on to inspire generations to come to never surrender to injustice, but to stand up for justice. Let us honour her memory by rededicating ourselves to the next phase of the struggle, the economic emancipation of the suffering masses. The struggle now is to lift the poor out of a life of hunger and despair, to bring universal health to people everywhere, to improve the quality of life for all, but most especially for the most vulnerable in the world. Let us ensure that no-one is left behind.

May the soul of this remarkable daughter of the soil now rest in eternal peace.

**Fare-thee-well
Hamba Kahle
Mama Winnie!**