

**SPEAKER'S NOTES FOR CLLR MPHONGA MATHIBANE, EXECUTIVE MAYOR OF JOHANNESBURG WELCOMING GUESTS TO THE HECTOR PIETERSEN MEMORIAL**

16 June 2016

The events of June 1976 are forever etched in our collective memory. Many of our nation's most prominent leaders and thinkers were active participants in the Soweto Uprising or followed the unfolding events from exile, from Robben Island, from the cells of John Vorster Square or from places of hiding across our City.

So our annual wreath-laying ceremony, for which we gather in the cold winter dawn each year on this day, this year has special significance as the nation marks the 40 year anniversary of that momentous day.

***Minister in the Presidency, Mr Jeff Radebe, the Minister of Arts and Culture, Mr Nathi Mthethwa, the Premier of Gauteng, Mr David Makhura, members of the Ndlovu family, veterans of our liberation struggle and the June 16 Uprising, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.***

The great poet of Jozi, Don Mattera, wrote in very poignant terms about the first day of the Soweto Uprising. In his collection of poetry, ***Azanian Love Song***, he reflected on the events that we are commemorating today:

***A bullet burnt***

***Into soft dark flesh***

***A child fell***

***Liquid life***

***Rushed hot***

***To stain the earth***

***He was the first victim***

***And now***

***Let grieving willows***

***Mark the spot***

***Let nature raise a monument***

***Of flowers and trees***

***Lest we forget the foul and wicked deed.***

Ladies and gentlemen,

This struggle we mark at this spot is not over. Our quest to create a better Soweto; a better Johannesburg; a better South Africa continues. We continue to campaign for education, for access to jobs and opportunities, for youth development.

At today's event, there are sufficient reasons for us to look back over the past 40 years with a tremendous degree of pride and satisfaction. We can, with great justification, report back to the Youth of 1976 - that many of the ideals that you campaigned for and marched for, have been realised.

But, as our beloved Freeman of the City, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela so pointedly reminded us: "***After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.***"

Honouring the spirit of the Class of '76, the City of Johannesburg has made steady progress in ascending those hills. Through our youth programmes such as ***Vulindlel'eJozi***, we are breaking down the barriers to opportunities. We are training people to add skills to their formal education and then matching their new skills with opportunities in the job market.

On this day when we mark a protest sparked by issues of access to education, it is empowering to know that – in rolling out the Vulindlel'eJozi programme - we have not accepted the skills gaps our youth face today as a given. We have built a network of Massive Open Online Varsities, which have transformed our libraries into vocational schools and technical colleges, using the best online learning from around the world. There are two of these right here in Soweto, at Jabavu and Emndeni. In these MOOVs nearly 5000 young people are already upgrading their skills in ways that matter to the job market. In partnership with provincial government and the university of Johannesburg we will, before the end of this term of office, be opening the doors of learning even wider through a matric rewrite and foundational skills programme. This, at scale, will serve 100's of thousands of youth per year, breaking down a major barrier to employment.

We are empowering communities to prosper in ways the apartheid government directly denied them – enabling them starting their own businesses as part of the Jozi@work programme or through our network of SMME hubs.

We are remaking the city that was designed to be so unequal, housing its prosperous minorities along tree-lined avenues, while the majority knew only what as

then the dust of the Soweto streets. We started that remaking here, in Soweto, which we transformed into a place of dignity, with tarred roads, new facilities, new clinics and connected it to the inner city via the Rea Vaya Bus Rapid Transit system.

The transformation we have brought to Soweto, we are now bringing to the City at large, beginning with our Corridors of Freedom.

Together with our partners in the private sector and civil society, we are offering hope and opportunity to the generation that fought for the liberation that made this all possible, and, of course, to the Youth of the 2016 generation. ***A new economic democracy is rising in Joburg*** and our youth will be the primary beneficiaries.

Programme director,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Bra Don Mattera reminded us of our responsibility to honour those who contributed to the liberation of South Africa and the creation of a free society where the future is now in our own hands.

***Let us not walk too gently***

***When we pass their graves***

***Our footsteps must stir their sleep***

***The dead must learn to talk***

***The living learn to die.***

I thank you.