**Program direkteur, Adjunk Minister - Peace Mabe**

**His Excellency the Acting President of the Republic of South Africa – Mr Paul Mashatile**

 **Die Minister van Sport, Kuns en Kultuur – Mr Gayton Mckenzie**

**All other Ministers and Deputy Ministers and Provincial Cabinet Ministers present**

**The Deputy Chairperson of the National House of Traditional and Khoi-San Leaders, Nkosi Langa Mavuso**

**Members of National and Provincial Parliaments present**

**Members of the Diplomatic Corps**

**Mayors, Councilors and all other elected leaders**

Geagte gaste, lede van die gemeenskap en al die pratige mense van ons pratige land. Laat my dan ook toe, om ons plaaslike mense van die pratige dorp - Outshoorn, uit te sonder.

Dit is vir my beide ’n eer en ’n vooreg om vandag hier in Oudtshoorn te staan, die warm hart van die Klein Karoo, waar ons saamkom vir die amptelike viering van Erfenisdag. Daar kon geen beter plek vir hierdie geleentheid wees nie. Oudtshoorn is ’n dorp waar geskiedenis, kultuur en sport bymekaarkom.

From the world-famous Cango Caves—millions of years old and still drawing people from across the world, to the **Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK),** which fills these streets with music, colour, and storytelling, Oudtshoorn has long been a beacon of South African creativity and resilience.

This town has given us legends: from players like Rudy Paige, to the first Western Cape candidate for Miss Universe Pre-Teen 2025, Lethabo Sekgobela, our Miss South Africa 2024, Mia Le Roux, and liberation stalwarts like Reggie Oliphant and Carol Moses to name a few. Their stories remind us of the power of perseverance, talent, and heritage.

Of course, like many small towns across our country, Oudtshoorn faces challenges: hardship and limited opportunities. Yet, in every challenge lies the seed of hope. That hope flourishes here—in our vibrant arts, our shared traditions, our love of sport, and our spirit of togetherness. Heritage Day reminds us that our stories and lived experiences are often all we need to keep moving forward.

So today, I thank the people of Oudtshoorn for opening your homes, talents, and heritage to South Africa. **Your story enriches our national story.**

**Mr. President, as Former Minister of Arts and Culture, you launched the Mzansi Golden Economy, so you understand how investing in heritage and festivals transforms lives.**

**Festivals are powerful economic drivers. They bring in tourists, they boost local businesses, they open doors for young creatives, and they create jobs across the value chain, from artists and organisers, to caterers, technicians, and transport providers. That is why we must do more. Every rand invested here is not a cost, it is an investment in social cohesion, in dignity, and in the future of our people. So Mr. President we MUST find more money to invest in festivals not less!**

In the weeks leading up to this day, we conducted Family History Workshops at the Western Cape Provincial Archives, grounding ourselves in the documents, stories, and records that safeguard our identity. We also celebrated **Koeksister Day** in Mitchells Plain—a reminder that cuisine is also heritage. Food carries family knowledge, regional identity, and cultural memory. Through museums and community storytelling, we are beginning to honour food as living heritage—just as Tannie Poppie from Laingsburg has done with her famous roosterkoek. I never pass along the N1 without stopping for one.

Acting President, I recently hosted the Mayor of Atlanta in Mitchells Plain. He enjoyed our lovely koesisters but there was a bigger and strategic message. My message to the mayor was clear, that next year when they host the FIFA World Cup and Bafana Bafana play in their beautiful country, that Koesister must be on the Menu for the World. By sharing our traditions widely, we transform heritage institutions into ambassadors of South Africa’s living heritage.

As we speak, we are also honouring diversity through the **Indigenous Games**, celebrating the wisdom and joy in play. Each of these events is more than just a date on the calendar. They are living proof of the richness of our South African heritage.

Later this week, there will be a heritage picnic and a walk to Mills Street in Caledon, declared a heritage site. In Ceres, the aviation-themed “Amazing Race” will take place, and in Bredasdorp, a heritage market where traditional favourites will be on sale. These are reminders that when we invest in culture and festivals, we are not simply funding events**—we are safeguarding the soul of our nation**.

Creative industries contribute significantly to culture, identity, and employment. For towns like Oudtshoorn, festivals such as the KKNK can mean the difference between stagnation and growth. These platforms allow artists to thrive, businesses to flourish, and communities to come alive. They remind us that heritage is not a relic—it is a living, breathing force that fuels identity and innovation. Festivals create jobs, build social cohesion, and showcase our province and country to the world.

This year’s Heritage programme shines with the talents of DJ Dillon King, the Greg Tyler Band, Siyakhona, Dream Chasers, and Hakkiesdraad. Their presence is proof of the power of creativity to bring people together, to inspire, and to heal.

**Maar ons moet ook eerlik wees: besnoeiings aan feeste en kulturele programme het ’n groot impak. Hierdie feeste is nie net ’n luukse nie—hulle is lewensbelangrik vir kunstenaars, toerisme, en die behoud van ons kulturele erfenis. As ons nie belê in kultuur nie, verloor ons ’n deel van onsself. Hierdie feeste is kragtige dryfvere van werkskepping, toerisme, en plaaslike ekonomiese groei.**

A few years ago, it was already estimated that the cultural and creative industries contribute over R160 billion to our national GDP—generating millions of jobs. Their impact on social cohesion is unmatched. **Without cultural festivals, we lose a vital part of who we are.**

Heritage is not optional. Arts, culture, food—these are not luxuries; they are necessities.

**As the Premier said earlier this year, in the Western Cape we are stepping up. Across the world, politics grow more divided, nationalism rises,** technology threatens cultural memory, and societies fragment. Amid this turbulence, one truth must remain constant: **our heritage.** When honoured, preserved, and shared, it has the power to unite us, foster understanding, and remind us of our shared humanity.

This morning in Dysselsdorp, we had the privilege of launching the **One Million Trees Project.** Trees are symbols of hope and community. They grow into living monuments, shaping the stories of those who walk among them. Let us never underestimate the small practices that shape our communities.

Mr Acting President, just 80km from where we are today, is the newly inscribed **UNESCO World Heritage Site** in Pinnacle Point Mosel Bay – this site signifies one of humanity’s most profound milestones. It is here in sites such as Pinnacle Point, that some of the earliest evidence of modern human thought, innovation, and symbolic behaviour has been uncovered – including the use of pigments, complex stone tools and harvesting of marine resources dating back over 160 000 years. This recognition does more than honour ancient archaeology; it positions South Africa as the cradle of humankind’s intellectual and cultural awakening - the Cradle of Human Culture, underscoring Africa’s foundational role in the global human story. For South Africa, it is a source of pride and responsibility - a reminder to protect these fragile sites, to deepen scientific inquiry, and to share this heritage with the world as a beacon of knowledge, identity, and belonging. Whether it is arts initiatives, youth development programmes, or investing in heritage sites - these are the seeds we plant for future generations.

To the people of Oudtshoorn, I say: this celebration is not just about today. It is about building a future where your children inherit not only your traditions, but also new opportunities.

As we open this celebration, I extend a warm welcome to each and every one of you. Today we honour our past, celebrate our present, and commit to a future of shared heritage so whether you are participating in this event, sitting at home on your couch, running a 5 km, a fun run, walking your dog, or braaiing today, visiting family or friends, This is YOUR day! Celebrate YOUR heritage the way YOU! That is what heritage is about!

**We are showing how heritage can serve as a bridge—not a border, it must unite us, not divide us.**

Let us not only preserve our past but reimagine its role in shaping a more inclusive and dynamic future. Let us harness heritage to foster dialogue, inspire understanding, and affirm dignity.

Wanneer mense hulself sien in mekaar se stories, wanneer erfenis lewend, relevant en gedeel word – is daar minder ruimte vir verdeeldheid en veel meer ruimte vir hoop.

Laat ons die lewendige en vermaaklikheids program geniet wat op ons wag vandag! Mag dit ons daaraan herinner dat ons ware krag in ons diversiteit lê.

Nkosi Sikelel’iAfrica | God seën Suid Afrika | God Bless South Africa!