

**CEREMONIAL ORATION OF THE GRAND PATRON OF THE NATIONAL ORDERS:
PRESIDENT THABO MBEKI,
21 SEPTEMBER 2007**

In the name of the people, I welcome you to the Union Buildings, the seat of government.

This ceremony is convened to admit into the ranks of the Order of Mendi, the Order of Ikhamanga and the Order of Mapungubwe, men and women who deserve high tribute for what they have done to enrich our lives and to make it possible for our diverse nation to proclaim itself an adherent of the ancient values of Ubuntu.

This is the tenth time that our free people have had occasion to salute in humble gratitude such distinguished men and women who are, indeed, the stars on our firmament.

Today, they are admitted into the ranks of those who belong to the esteemed National Orders of our Republic. Because of their efforts, we are able to live and develop in a world of freedom, without the fetters of oppression or exclusion.

The honours that we bestow today tell the story of what and who we are and who we shall be. These National Orders represent the nobility of human endeavour, constituting a hall of fame that will today be enriched by new and distinguished members.

We have convened today at the seat of government, the Union Buildings, to award the **Order of Mendi for Bravery** to our brave hearts, those who gave or risked their lives so that others may live. These South Africans, for whom human life is priceless, have reaffirmed the principle borne of struggle, of the right to life.

They have confronted clear and present danger of one kind or another, with full knowledge of the potential harm to themselves, to save human life and limb. They vanquished the natural instinct of self-preservation with the same courage and willingness to sacrifice for the greater good that was demonstrated by the heroes of the SS Mendi.

By their deeds, they re-affirmed our philosophy of Ubuntu – we are because of you!

We have convened today at the seat of government, the Union Buildings, to admit into the **Order of Ikhamanga**, our leading cultural workers and sportsmen and women. All of them have contributed to the pride we as a nation feel in our achievements that celebrate our inner African and human soul.

Their **accomplishments** are representative of the wealth of human imagination and talent brought forth from our continent, which has, since time immemorial, endowed the planet earth with the things of beauty that are products of human creativity.

We have convened today at the seat of government, the Union Buildings, to admit some exceptional persons to the **Order of Mapungubwe**. These are people whose activities cannot but be described as excellent.

They are the men and women who dared to act outside the boundaries of the ordinary, taking upon themselves the skill and daring of the majestic bird on our Coat of Arms which

stands on permanent guard to protect the nation.

Her wings commune with the beams of the rising sun, as the people of Mapungubwe conversed with nature, the peoples of the universe, and the world of creative thought.

These distinguished South Africans we honour today are fit and proper persons to receive these awards because they occupy an important place among us.

They are our symbols of human creative talent, the guardians of ubuntu who manifest the national gift of courage that rises with danger, our touchstones for our collective accomplishments as a nation, and stalwarts of human solidarity.

They stand as beacons that must guide us forever as we build a society founded on the high ideals of freedom, justice, equality and ***human solidarity***.

For all time, these men and women will be admitted as esteemed members of these Orders, subject to the precedence and authority of our National Anthem, our National Flag, and our National Coat of Arms, which represent the highest repositories of our common nationhood.

We are especially blessed that this ceremony permits us to share a brief encounter with the honoured Members of the National Orders, who live. We are especially privileged that this ceremony brings us into communion with the noble souls of the honoured Members of the National Orders, who have departed from the world of the living.

To them all, the living and the dead, on this day, the nation says – *bayethe!*

On this day, let all citizens and patriots proclaim:
Glory to the Honoured Members of the National Orders!
God Bless Africa!
Save her children!
Grant her peace!

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Issued by GCIS on behalf of the Presidency