**Oliver and Adelaide Tambo Foundation**

**CEO- Linda Vilakazi’s speech at the Ubuntu Awards**

Good evening,

Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, ministers, dignitaries, esteemed guests

Indeed this year marks an important era in the lives of all South Africans as we commemorate what would have been Oliver Tambo’s 100th birthday, had he still been alive.

The Oliver & Adelaide Tambo Foundation, its trustees (some present here tonight) and the Tambo Family commend the African National Congress-led Government and the President of the republic, President Jacob Zuma for dedicating the year 2017 to Oliver Tambo.

Oliver Tambo represents what most of us wish to achieve in a lifetime but often fail to do so. Born in 1917 in rural Eastern Cape, Nkantolo village he defied the then current trends of young men leaving school early to work in the mines, herd cattle and help support their families. He went on to pursue education up to University. Not only did he excel in his studies, he actively participated in and led the student political movement at Fort Hare amongst others. He later went on to qualify as a scientist, a passionate Mathematics and Science teacher and later a lawyer. As if not enough he successfully led the ANC in exile, and through his innate diplomatic skills mobilized international support for the liberation movement, and safely delivered the ANC back home ready to take its rightful position as leader of the first democratically elected government.

Oliver lived to be the longest serving President of the African National Congress, 24 years.

Indeed…

‘Great leaders don’t just appear and disappear in history. They make it, shape and mold it, transform it and leave behind an everlasting legacy’.

And so did Oliver.

How then do we celebrate this great leader, giant, son of the soil….

What do we do at the Foundation?

Our mandate at the Foundation is to promote his legacy by supporting and addressing socio–economic issues aimed at the upliftment and advancement of the most marginalized and the promotion of arts, culture and heritage.

Our work touches on a number of initiatives ranging from Documenting and Memorializing his legacy; using his values to help South Africa resolve some of its long-standing intractable problems, this we do through research, debates and dialogues that attract panelists and delegates across various sectors; lastly we focus on community work that seeks to promote advancement in education, women and youth empowerment.

This we cannot do alone and have over the years since our formation in 2011, we appreciate the support we received from our partners.

In particular the Department of International Relations and Corporation proved to not only be a partner, but a true champion in honoring Tambo’s legacy. The department, under the leadership of Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, not only named their building after Tambo, but also adopted his diplomatic excellence and values in guiding the work they do. They further initiated projects that continue to promote and preserve his legacy. Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, we thank you for your leadership and guidance in this work. Tonight is but one of those visible, impactful initiatives you’ve led in honoring Tambo in a lasting way. Thank you.

 And indeed, we CONGRATULATE all those who received awards tonight, you make us all proud.

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So in true South African culture a number of events are being planned to mark the Centenary year as proclaimed by the President. Every month, starting this February celebratory events will be hosted across all provinces to mark and celebrate his legacy. With the highlight being the Annual Memorial Lecture to be held on 27th October 2017! WATCH THE SPACE

What then after the dust settles in December 2017?

Representing the Foundation let me use this occasion to appeal to broader South Africa for the people of Nkantolo:

Nkantolo being the village where OR was born.

If anything, may I humbly request that in honoring Tambo we make real of the promises made to Tambo as far back as 1993. It is recorded that in 1993 Oliver stood on the grounds in Nkantolo and requested that a school be built in his name, the Oliver Tambo Technical High School. This was too among others, demonstrate his commitment to quality education and mark the sacrifice and contribution he made to South Africa’s liberation. Indeed some response came by however, the school was never equipped to resemble a technical school nor truly honor the man it's named after.

If anything my appeal is that 'when the dust settles' in December 2017 can we have completed the upgrade of this school into a renowned International Centre of excellence both in infrastructure and content i.e. Quality of teaching. Fortunately, the school has a strong teaching team and a strong governing body. It can be done.

Also, if we can prioritize the provision of water and sanitation to schools in Nkantolo and later greater Mbizana. Imagine a day in school with no access to water or sanitation of any form.

When we close 2017 and showcase progress in Nkantolo, we as the Foundation will carry on the baton and spread the development to other areas.

This is our appeal and we believe it can be done. Now more than ever, we would like to honor his legacy by emulating his values and follow in his footsteps.

Thank you and Goodnight