

Speech for Dr Anna Mokgokong to introduce the Hon Paul Mashatile, Minister of Arts and Culture of the Republic of South Africa

Ladies and gentlemen, honored guests. It is a fact that the Department of Arts & Culture has played an important and vital role in the founding and development of the Ifa Lethu Foundation since it launched officially in 2005. We were able to do this with seed funding from the Department and a commitment to our vision.

When I look at what was said on that occasion by the then Minister, “the racist state did not succeed in silencing the voice of the arts. Artists from every community and every discipline grabbed the opportunities that were available to give expression to these values. They played a significant role in the mass mobilisation that took-off during the 1980s. Indeed it could be said that if you wanted to gauge the mood in the townships, the arts were among the most reliable means of measuring it.”

Today’s approach to the arts is no different. The Premise, Promise and Pledge on the DACs website states: “Our premise is the unshakeable conviction that arts and culture and heritage are not hobbies or ‘entertainment.’ They are an outward expression of that which stirs in man’s soul to reveal itself as commercial products that are testament to the present and how it is inextricably linked to the past and future. We are committed to the development, promotion and development of arts, culture and heritage sector as the cornerstone of job creation, skills development and economic self-determination. The empowerment of the creative class is the meaning of purpose..... Above all, it is to mainstream arts, culture and heritage activities as instruments for transformation and tools for economic self-liberation, especially among the historically disadvantaged individuals and communities.”

This closely mirrors the beliefs and visions of Ifa Lethu and we cannot thank the Department enough for its continued support – financially and morally – over the past 9 years.

Honorable Minister, we are honored to have you here as our guest and to share **our** heritage with you in the form of this event to honour one of our most beloved founding donors and supporters. To share this with you is indeed a highlight for our Board, our supporters, our young emerging artists and our friends.

The work your Ministry undertakes is essential to the sustained survival of our artistic and cultural heritage – from the past to the future. We look forward to a long and mutually beneficial partnership well into the next decade.