



Metropolitan Park, Block B, 1st Floor, 8 Hillside Road, Johannesburg | Tel: +27(11) 079 1642 | Email: info@nfdi.org.za

**Statement by Chairperson, Dr Brigalia Bam of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation.**

Good morning Friends, Colleagues, Compatriots, Ladies and Gentlemen:

1. I take this opportunity first of all on behalf on the Thabo Mbeki Foundation to welcome all of you to this Inaugural Dialogue of the National Foundations Dialogue Initiative. First, I must thank the former Presidents and heads of state of South Africa attending this Dialogue today and thereby lend their support to this initiative. Among them I make special mention of Dr Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Head of UN Women and Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations, based in New York. Dr Mlambo-Ngcuka has made a very special effort to send us a special message on behalf of the Umlambo Foundation. Of course, Phumzile was the Deputy President of South Africa between 2005 and 2007 when President Thabo Mbeki resigned. Thank you.

2. I also take this opportunity to welcome our fellow Foundations that have formed themselves into the National Foundations Dialogue Initiative, and to thank them for this initiative, and for making it possible for the Foundations to serve as an example to this nation of cooperation, integrity and seeking together only that which is best for South Africa.

3. This is a very important day for us. It is a very important day for South Africa. We have been meeting as Foundations since 2015. We have debated and examined a model for addressing the challenges that South Africa faces. We have deliberated, at times agreed, and at other times disagreed. We have arrived at a point where we were convinced that our collective voice was necessary and needed to be heard by fellow South Africans.

4. We wanted to leverage the collective intelligence, reputation and honour held by all the Foundations that bear the names of these illustrious sons and daughters of this country reflected in the names of our Foundations. We sought to find essentially that which united us rather than that which divided us. We were inspired by the wisdom of Nelson Mandela who said that the new South Africa was born out of dialogue. Dialogue is what makes South Africa what it is.

5. At the time that we invited the Foundations to join us in a common quest for solutions to the challenges facing our country, it was well before the defining moments of recent events: the Inkandla Judgment of the Constitutional Court, or even more recently the rapid changes in government. The signs

were there for all to see when the President was booed by elements of the crowd at the funeral of the late Nelson Mandela, the Marikana episode, and the disruptions in our National Parliament. We knew that South Africans were angry and protests everywhere had become the habit of engagement and expression. We resolved that there must be another way in which South Africans could handle these social and political matters about which they felt very deeply.

6. We did not embark on this initiative because we believed that we had the answers to all the problems. We don't. We saw ourselves as a catalyst, a vehicle that facilitates common expression and common action. We were moved to the belief that as had been the case in the recent past, it was not beyond South Africans to find the solutions in such a manner as to uphold and defend the gains of our constitutional democracy. However, our starting point has to be a constructive engagement with the present in order to shape together a common future.

7. Finally, I wish to thank the Secretariat of the NFDI who have put this event together, and for the support of the Reference Group. We hope to bring together across our land the wisdom and the passion that only South Africans can display. We are looking forward to hear more from South Africans in all walks of life, in all the nooks and crannies of our beloved South Africa. Together we hope that we can get South Africans talking to avoid any pending catastrophe but to make it work for all its peoples.

Thank you.

Johannesburg, 5 May 2017.

1 The National Foundations Dialogues Initiative (NFDI) is a programme of the following Foundations acting together: The Albert Luthuli Foundation, the Robert Sobukwe Trust, the Helen Suzman Foundation, the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation, the FW de Klerk Foundation, the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, Umlambo Foundation, and the Jakes Gerwel Foundation.