

***Address by MEC for Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs the of  
United States of America's Independence Day Celebrations on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2014***

Programme Director,  
US Consular General, Mr Taylor Ruggles,  
Distinguished Guests,  
All protocols observed,  
Good Evening.

I wish to start by thanking you for inviting me to be part of this historical occasion where the world's greatest nation reminiscences about where it comes from. Often independence or freedom days help remind us about the bitter past experiences our nations had to traverse before enjoying civil liberties and the rule of law that are fundamental pillars of all modern democratic states. It therefore becomes imperative and a national duty to set aside time to acknowledge the strides made by our fore-bearers in freeing their nations from various forms of oppression that restricted people from expressing their creative and industrial capacities to improve their own lives and that of fellow compatriots and human beings the world over. Freedom or independence days therefore become monuments that remind us that as we march forward in the liberated world, we shouldn't underestimate the sacrifices made to transform the world to be what it is today amid some pockets of human tragedies that are still reported in various parts of the globe.

They are monuments since they also serve as reference points for future actions especially those designed to promote human and civil rights as we have acknowledged in the American situation with respect to the liberation of American people from the British rule in 1776. Such a stance could have influenced the Civil Rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s as African Americans led the campaign to ensure that the freedom that was achieved in 1776 was extended to all citizens regardless of their colour and background. The Declaration of the American Independence on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1776 seems to have formed a strong foundation for the American people to forge a common identity in that this date also marks the passing away of the most influential and respected founding fathers of the present American nation, Presidents Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, and James Monroe while

President Calvin Coolidge was born on the 4<sup>th</sup> July – the Independence Day. This illustrates the importance of this day in the American calendar and we therefore congratulate you for having such remarkable coincidences in your historical heritage.

The American and South African history has some commonalities as we all at some time emerged out of the British colonial rule. Our shared values between our peoples have also been largely reflected in our trade and diplomatic ties that had seen mutual benefits on both sides. More importantly the similarities in our cultural expressions, especially in the performing arts like music and film industry are well pronounced which is indicative of why the Global Leadership Report revealed that around 76% of South Africans do support linkages with America. Collaboration with USA in various fields dates back to 1799 when the first American diplomatic office was opened in Cape Town and in the subsequent years this liaison was expanded to the rest of the country. We are delighted that such experience resulted in the American people finding common grounds to work closely with us on a wide range of socio-economic areas as we have a history of American missionaries that settled in our communities and contributed to the development of historically oppressed black communities.

Your association with educational efforts in this province has reference in some of the two iconic schools in this province, Adams College and Inanda Seminary that both had produced a stellar of leaders in our society – with the former enlisting amongst its illustrious alumnus, the present African Union Commission Chair, Dr Nkosazana Zuma and three African ANC presidents like Dr John Dube, Dr Pixley ka Isaka Seme and Nobel Peace Laureate Chief Albert Luthuli which is illustrative of USA's immense contribution to the development our country's leadership.

Some American government and private sector organizations have extended constant humanitarian support to our people – and with KwaZulu-Natal highly affected by the scourge of HIV/AIDS we are grateful to the American donations towards efforts directed at reversing the impact of this deadly health condition. We are seeing positive signs with infected people now living longer due to the provision of retroviral treatment and the

reduction of new infections as of results of concerted educational and public awareness programmes.

The injustices meted on the majority black people by the previous racist governments in this country were noted by the entire world community and the Americans became actively involved in opposing apartheid through various civil formations such as the global anti-apartheid movement and other forms of generous activities including granting of scholarships to deserving students from deprived communities. Likewise the struggle for civil rights – in search for the extension of civil liberties and freedom for African Americans inspired our own campaign for liberation. It's that reason that the persona of our liberation icon, late President Nelson Mandela became synonymous with the role played by Dr Martin Luther King Junior in the civil rights movement hence our historical experiences have a lot in common. After emerging from the colonial control in 1776 you had to confront the vestiges of racism and slavery that had condemned African Americans to second class citizenry and the emergence of the civil rights campaigns represented another phase that was orchestrated to ensure that all Americans enjoyed equal rights and access to diverse socio-economic opportunities under the auspices of an American dream.

In South Africa while colonial rule is said to have ended with the integration of former Boer Republics and British colonies into a Union government in 1910, the demon of racism remained in place until 1994 when our country achieved its own independence – with black people acquiring voters' rights for the first time in the history of the country of their birth. As you celebrate your 238 anniversary to mark the momentous independence from Britain, our beloved country is still abuzz with excitement that the 20 years of apartheid period has been characterised by significant creation of socio-economic opportunities for our people notwithstanding the fact that discriminatory apartheid laws were so entrenched that it will take some time and relentless efforts to achieve a fully equitable society.

It is that reason that contribution by our American friends in initiatives such as educational programmes and investments in our various sectors of our economy to bolster strong skills base essential for sustainable development and creation of business and employment opportunities is high appreciated. Trade and diplomatic bilateral co-operation between our

nations that includes investments and the deployment of peace-corps volunteers had helped us make some vivid progress with regard to the attainment of our development goals. We are mindful that since 2000 trade between our nations has increased astronomically and this has been in the main attributed to the advent of Africa Growth & Opportunity Act that created a meaningful and mutual beneficiary trade between USA and Africa as this arrangement provides duty free entry of African products to the American market. Likewise AGOA promotes a stable trade environment between America and the 39 African states and we are delighted that this arrangement was in 2012 extended hence we have been urging our own traders to exploit this for their advantage in terms of accessing the lucrative American market while also capitalising on quality American imports to grow their businesses.

Regionally, by 2013 more than \$63 billion worth of goods was exchanged between the USA and Sub-Saharan Africa which translated into \$39 billion imports and \$24 billion exports respectively in favour of the African continent. In particular, most American exports at 30% compared to the rest of the continent were destined for South Africa which in turn sold a variety of products such as vehicle parts, metals and fresh produce to USA while Nigeria and Angola exported large quantities of petroleum products. In KwaZulu-Natal are determined in upping and consolidating our country's trade relations with America by capitalising on our strategic position with advanced trade logistics especially in the form of rail and road networks that are complemented by two sea ports in Durban and Richards Bay that provide convenient access to both export and import markets for the region.

In view of the fast paced global trade which requires speedy movement of goods and people, especially business people and the prospect of growth and of course our ambition to play a role in the regional and global economic development, we have established Dube Trade Port on the north of the City of Durban. This initiative was founded first and foremost to assist in positioning KwaZulu-Natal as the gateway to the region and the rest of the world in terms of investments and tourism industry growth as it is fully integrated to other vital developmental logistics such as rail and road networks and as well as the country's two advanced sea ports in Durban and Richards Bay.

Currently we are working on engineering this project into an *aerotropolis* which is the new developmental phenomenon – implying a city that develops around an airport infrastructure as the nucleus with other business operations serving as supporting and sustainable tentacles around the airport facility. Already numerous business operations are mushrooming around Dube Trade Port in the form of agrizone, cargozone, tradezone and we are presently receiving enquiries from interest investors wishing to seize the opportunity of settling in this convenient location that guarantee easy access to export and import markets. This is of course an ideal location for those interested in the freight, travel, hospitality and leisure industries.

Moreover, Dube Trade Port has become a practical springboard to access the regional market – with direct flights now landing on numerous capital cities in the region to ensure easy movement by business people and tourists. We are also gain global footprint the Emirates Airline and Air Mauritius now flying directly to Durban to enable tourists and business travellers to explore leisure and entrepreneurial opportunities in the region and the rest of Asia and Indian Ocean island nations. The reigning co-operation with USA we believe will add value to our endeavours of projecting KwaZulu-Natal as vital player in the regional and continental development. We therefore anticipate that more business people from North America would be alerted to the massive investment opportunities available in this coastal province which is endowed with diverse natural resources, favourable climatic conditions and of course exquisite tourism and cultural attractions.

Consular-General Ruggles, we would also like to register our heartfelt appreciation for your office's continuous association with developmental initiatives in this province, especially in the education field where you are working closely with academic institutions in the promotion of science, engineering, technology and the arts. Your recent investment in support of scientific inclined curriculum development project at UKZN couldn't go unnoticed. We are also mindful of your active involvement in nature conservation through your liaison with KZN Ezemvelo Wildlife projects including the campaign against the ruthless rhino poaching that is becoming endemic across the world. These are some of the indicators of the level of co-operation between the American people and our own country and province which certainly augurs well for our collective future endeavours.

Finally, once again, we wish to extend our best wishes to the American people as they mark their 238 anniversary of their Independence. We hope that this milestone will continue

serving as a reminder, not only for the Americans, but for the rest of the world that genuine independence is synonymous with respect and protection of human rights and entrenchment of democratic values and civil liberties.

As stated above, we had emerged from similar experiences which we should continue highlighting as the basis to build and deepen our trade and diplomatic relations for mutual benefits for our peoples and the rest of the world. The symbiotic linkage of USA to Africa was further confirmed through the ascendancy of the first African American President Barak Obama to the highest position in the land which in the main confirmed the American dream. His success and positive attitude towards the development and the role of the African continent is admired by the majority of our people.

I thank you,

**Mr Michael Mabuyakhulu, MPP**  
**MEC for Economic Development, Tourism & Environmental Affairs**