



**Virtual Address By Minister of Justice and Correctional Services Ronald Lamola (MP) on Greek National Day and the Bicentennial Anniversary of the Greek Revolution, Delivered on 25 March 2021**

**Mr Stefanos Ioannidis, Chargé d'affaires of the Embassy of the Hellenic Republic in Pretoria**

**His Beatitude Pope Theodoris II, The Head of the Greek Orthodox Church**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Members of the Hellenic Community**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is my pleasure on behalf the South African Government and the people of South Africa to extend our heartfelt congratulations to the President, the Government, the wonderful people of Greece and the Diaspora on this, their 200<sup>th</sup> celebration of the Independence of the Hellenic Republic.

I wish to reiterate our commitment to continue strengthening the important and historic partnership between our respective countries and our peoples.

The war cry "Freedom or Death" which echoed across Greece during the revolution inspired many other revolutions, including our very own struggle for liberation from colonial oppression and apartheid. The sentiments of Freedom or Death were embodied by our first democratically elected President Nelson Mandela in his seminal statement in the dock 57 years ago wherein he invoked this famous passage "***I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons***

***live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die.”***

As perhaps the gods of fate would have it alongside him was the recently departed Advocate George Bizos a great son of the Hellenic Republic a true exponent of Human Rights and democracy as a whole.

As a new democracy we are greatly indebted to Advocate Bizos for his contribution to our country by all accounts his work promulgated ***the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities.***

The continued presence in and commitment to this land of ours of an estimated 45 000 Greek-South Africans, stands as testimony to the shared values and common destiny that we share as governments, cultures, and democratic civilizations. It can thus be rightly expected of us to continue the reaffirmation and search for closer cooperation as we seek to address the global challenges that face our planet and our peoples.

This commitment will, in the spirit of our two nations, always include the protection of the principles and values that both Greece and South Africa espouse as democratic societies.

It is also a pleasing, co-incident that the land in which democracy was birthed celebrates its national day in a month which celebrated as Human Rights Month in South Africa. As we celebrate this very important month of our nascent democracy, we do so in the name of our stalwart and heroine, Mme Charlotte Manye Maxeke. As Human Rights Month is celebrated under the theme: ***“THE YEAR OF CHARLOTTE MAXEKE: PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN THE AGE OF COVID-19”.***

Like Laskarina Boubourina, Charlotte Maxeke is a heroine of our struggle. We can without a doubt say without the contributions of Maxeke and Boubourina alike, our nations may have been remarkably different to what they have become today.

My dear friends it would be remiss of us not to acknowledge that these momentous celebrations are marred by the advent of COVID-19 which has spared no nation.

Now more than ever we are called upon by our endangered future to deepen our historical ties and form a united front against vaccine apartheid or nationalism. The world is an interconnected society and therefore we share a common fate. It is against this background that we call for the waiver intellectual property rights tied to Covid-19 vaccines. Not only is vaccine apartheid morally indefensible it deepens global inequalities and erodes our ability build a truly global community. We cannot stand on the margins whilst a pandemic is commodified to benefit a select few. Doing nothing would be one of the great injustices of our era.

On behalf of the people of South Africa, we commend you the people of Greece for your unwavering commitment to building a society which is anchored on democracy. I have no doubt that as you celebrate 25 years of constitutionalism, we will look to you for insights on how we continue to entrench constitutionalism, democracy, and the rule of law as a framework for a better society.

As we join you in this celebration, we wish President Katerina Sakelaropoulou and the peoples of Greece prosperity and good health. May the friendship between our two nations continue for many more years.

I thank you.