



sport, arts & culture

Department:
Sport, Arts and Culture
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MEDIA STATEMENT

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MANDELA GIFTS DECLARED BY SAHRA AS SPECIFICALLY DECLARED HERITAGE COLLECTION

Mthatha: The Nelson Mandela Museum, in partnership with the South African Heritage Resources Agency, will mark International Museum Day with a historic milestone: the official recognition of Nelson Mandela's gifted collection as a Specifically Declared Heritage Collection

On 18 May 2026, at the Nelson Mandela Museum Bhunga Building in Mthatha, the Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture, Gayton McKenzie, will formally hand over the declaration certificate cementing the collection's status as a protected national treasure. Gazetted under Section 32 of the National Heritage Resources Act (No. 25 of 1999), this declaration ensures that the collection affectionately known as the "Gifts of the Nation" is safeguarded against sale, loss, damage, or fragmentation. This decisive step follows past concerns over attempts to auction Madiba's personal items.

More than preservation, this declaration honours Madiba's vision - a living museum that celebrates the global community who stood with South Africa in its struggle for freedom. The Bhunga Building was established precisely to house, protect, and share these powerful symbols of solidarity.

The collection, comprising approximately 3,900 objects, includes beadwork, textiles, sculptures, medals, paintings, handcrafted items, and heartfelt gifts from children across the world. From heads of state, royalty, and traditional leaders to ordinary citizens, each piece reflects the extraordinary reach of Mandela's legacy, bridging cultures, nations, and generations.

These artefacts are more than objects; they are a material story of global unity, capturing South Africa's re-entry into the international community and Mandela's enduring role as a moral compass to the world.

Acting CEO, Mr Mandisi Msongelwa, emphasised the broader impact:

"This declaration is a significant milestone for the Museum. It strengthens our positioning locally, nationally, and globally, while unlocking opportunities for tourism and economic growth within the King Sabata Dalindyebo Local Municipality and the OR Tambo District." He added:

“We believe this recognition will elevate the Nelson Mandela Museum as a destination of choice, attracting visitors from across the country and the world.”

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