



## **FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT - 18 JULY 2022**

### **NELSON MANDELA DAY REMINDS US THAT THE FUTURE IS IN OUR HANDS**

Dear Fellow South African,

Today is Nelson Mandela Day, which is commemorated in South Africa and around the world.

In honour of the birthday of the founding father of our democracy, we are called on to dedicate 67 minutes to doing good works, serving others and making a difference in our communities.

At a time when so much of the world is beset by hardship and strife, we are inspired by Madiba's words that "it is in our hands to make a difference and to make the world a better place".

Across the length and breadth of our country today, South Africans are taking Madiba's message to heart. They are making a positive contribution. They are volunteering in shelters and care facilities. They are helping to feed and clothe the needy. They are helping to clean their communities. They are performing acts of kindness and service, both big and small.

Nelson Mandela Day is about inculcating a culture of service that lasts beyond the 67 minutes every year on the 18th of July.

This is a difficult time for our country.

We are in the midst of an energy crisis that is causing great hardship. A spate of violent crimes is heightening fear and insecurity in communities. Even as our economy is recovering from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, poverty and unemployment is taking a heavy toll on millions who are struggling to make ends meet. Corruption has eaten away at our nation's soul and has severely eroded the social compact between the state and citizens.

Nelson Mandela Day is an opportunity to remember that these problems, like so many we have faced before, are not insurmountable. They can be overcome.

This day is an opportunity to recommit ourselves to upholding the values Madiba stood for and to building the South Africa to which he dedicated his life.

He always reminded us that there is no easy walk to freedom and that we share a common responsibility for nation-building.

Time and again, we have been pulled back from the brink by the activism and resilience of our people. Community, faith-based and grassroots organisations have acted in defence of human rights, our Constitution and the interests of our citizens.

At times when the state has faltered, it has been civil society that has reminded us of our obligation to advance the ideals for which Madiba and generations of freedom fighters made such sacrifices.

The programme for democratic renewal launched by a group of civil society organisations earlier this month, which calls for people's power to be re-ignited, is to be welcomed.

It is a call for communities to organise and mobilise around economic inclusion, social and climate justice and ethical behaviour.

Many civil society organisations are rooted in our communities and have the keenest appreciation of the struggles of our people. Engaging and working with government to overcome the challenges in our society is what participatory democracy is all about.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, this collaboration between government, civil society and other social partners was instrumental in responding to a dire health emergency and providing support to society's most vulnerable. Such partnerships are vital as we strive to rebuild our economy.

Building a better South Africa requires each and every one of us to make a contribution in whatever way we can. Defending our democracy begins with individual acts, like joining a community policing forum, volunteering at a charity or a shelter, reporting crime or refusing to pay a bribe.

Let us evoke Madiba's 'new patriotism', where South Africans are determined to work together and make our country a winning nation. We cannot leave it to others to realise the South Africa of our dreams. The future of our country is indeed in our hands.

Wherever you may be today, I wish you a happy and meaningful Nelson Mandela Day.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Cyril Ramaphosa". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.