

SPEECH BY FREE STATE MEC FOR SPORT, ARTS, CULTURE AND RECREATION, MR DAN KGOZHULE, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE FOURTH OR TAMBO GAMES, WELKOM

2 October 2009

Programme director
Executive Mayor of the hosting district, Comrade Sebenzile Ngangelizwe
Executive mayors, mayors and councillors present
Managers and officials in government
Athletes from the five districts of our province
Honoured guests
Comrades
Ladies and gentlemen

May I take this opportunity to thank you heartily for taking time to be part of this event. The OR Tambo Games are indeed an important platform in the growth and development of our youth and provincial athletes. In our quest as government to actively engage young people in fruitful activities that will benefit them in the long run we deemed it fit that this kind of a programme must be staged on an annual basis as part of all other activities we are staging in our province.

Some of such activities include the indigenous games the national tournament of which was held in Durban last weekend. Your presence here as community, government and political leaders should therefore serve as an inspiration to these young people who should see in it, that is your presence, the seriousness of these efforts of government to actively encourage them to take part in sport and recreation.

As we enter the fourth provincial OR Tambo Games it is also befitting that we take a moment to consider the calibre of these games in terms of the person after whom they have been named. It is easy for us to forget where we come from as a country and as the former oppressed masses of this country. It is particularly so for the youth who never had a chance of going through the turbulence and the tragedies of apartheid. We are about fifteen years since the demise of apartheid and a tendency to forget those who fought against this system of prejudice and oppression is pre-eminent.

When we named these games after Comrade Oliver Reginald Tambo part of the aim was to ensure that his name and his legacy live on. We are proud as the Free State to have associated these games with this hero of our struggle. For those young people who are here and elsewhere who still do not know who is OR Tambo in whose name these games are played let us ask this very question: who is OR Tambo? Let us answer this question in a nutshell.

Comrade Oliver Tambo was born five years after the birth of the ANC on 27 October 1917. He was born in a rural town, Mbizana, in eastern Mpondoland in what was then the Cape Province (now Eastern Cape). He spent most of his life serving in the struggle against apartheid. He was among the founding members of the ANC Youth League in 1944 and became its first national secretary. In the ANC Youth League, Tambo teamed up with Walter Sisulu, Nelson Mandela, Ashby Mda, Anton Lembede and others to bring a bold, new spirit of militancy into the post-war ANC.

He returned to South Africa in 1991, after over three decades in exile. At the ANC's first legal national conference inside South Africa, held in Durban in July 1991, Tambo was elected national Chairperson of the ANC. Oliver Reginald Tambo died from a stroke at 3h10 on 24 April 1993. In 2007, as the OR Tambo Games tournament entered its third edition, we celebrated the 90th anniversary of Ntate OR

Tambo! This year of the fourth OR Tambo Games, on 27 October 2009, this stalwart of our liberation struggle would have been celebrating his 92 year birthday.

Programme director, tonight we are gathered in this manner to mark the official opening of the 2008 OR Tambo Games. Starting from tonight until the end of these Games on Sunday we intend to host a tournament which is befitting to the historical and political name after which they are named. Comrade OR Tambo is a historical giant upon whose shoulders we need to stand if we want to see well into the future of this country and the world. An astute politician, diplomat, global leader, activist and indeed a martyr who was prepared to lay down his life for his people; Comrade OR Tambo must be honoured in many and various ways.

As the Free State provincial government we are proud to be staging these games in the honour of this stalwart of our liberation struggle. This is a contribution that we are making as part of our mandate to, amongst other things build social cohesion, preserve the memory of our nation, promote nation building, preserve our cultural heritage and enhance sport and recreation.

Yes indeed we have to celebrate the spirit of this giant of our liberation struggle. The young people who are part of these games and those across the length and breadth of our province and country must get to know and never forget historical giants such as OR who have brought our country to where it is. As the rest of the country will be remembering this historical giant we as the Free State are doing it in a very intense way during this weekend, starting from tonight until Sunday.

Through various sporting activities, at various sporting fields within Matjhabeng, our athletes will sweat it out driven by nothing but this spirit of OR Tambo. As these young people of our province engage in their sporting activities between tomorrow and Sunday as well as during the rest of their sporting careers they must know that there are those of their forebears such as Comrade OR Tambo who sacrificed their youth, their family lives and their own lives for us to be where we are. These young people must persevere to do their best in the sporting arena to reach the highest levels of sport participation and competitions in honour of people like OR Tambo.

Let me take this opportunity to wish all the athletes who are part of these games the best of luck in their quest to do well in these games and in the rest of their sporting career. I want to encourage you as young people to take sport and recreation seriously. I am sure you can all see that sport is a serious business internationally. Next to your studies and your school work sport must be something that is in your heart. It must be something you can depend on to shape your future.

I thank you.