**REMARKS BY ANC PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA AT THE IFTAR DINNER HOSTED BY THE MUSLIM JUDICIAL COUNCIL**

TUSCANY GARDENS, RYLANDS ESTATE, CAPE TOWN

30 MAY 2018

\*Programme Director,

President of the Muslim Judicial Council, Sheikh Irfaan Abrahams

Life President of the MJC and Former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Sheikh Gamied Gabier,

Former President of the MJC, Moulana Igsaan Hendricks,

Aunty Fareeda Omar, the wife of our late stalwart, Cde Dullah Omar,

All Muslim Theologian bodies present here,

Leaders of various civil society bodies,

Business and community leaders,

Representatives of sports bodies,

My Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Receive my warm and heartfelt greetings.

I am deeply honoured to have been invited by the Muslim Judicial Council to meet with the Muslim community of the Cape in all its diversity.

 I am especially privileged to be allowed into one of your most hallowed traditions, the ritual of breaking your fast – the Iftar – in the month of Ramadan.

My own life has intersected with so many Muslims who derived their commitment and courage directly from the holy and empowering teachings and rituals of Islam.

 They were therefore capable of outstanding contribution and enormous sacrifice in the strugglefor a democratic South Africa that is non-racial, non-sexist, non-sectarian, united and prosperous society.

It was people like Dr Abdurahman, Cissy Gool, Dullah Omar, Imam Abdullah Haron and Sheikh Nazeem Mohamed who ensured that Muslims were an integral part of the achievement and the construction of a free and democratic South Africa.

 Many of the forebearers of these leaders were brought to these shores in chains.

Their devotion to the values of Islam allowed them to fight colonialism and imperialism, whether in the Malay archipelago, the Indian sub-continent or inAfrica.

Tuan Guru, Sheikh Yusuf, Saartjie van die Kaap and the other great pioneers of Islam in South Africa knew that colonialism and its offspring, apartheid, could never be justified and mustalways be combated.

Twenty-four years ago, Nelson Mandela inaugurated the new South Africa with the prayers of leaders like Sheikh Nazeem Mohammed reverberating across the country.

On that day we started the work to create the South Africa of our dreams.

We incorporated in those dreams the aspirations you spoke about at the National Muslim Conference in 1993, on the eve of our democracy.

You wanted a Constitution that restored dignity and equality for all people; you wanted a country free of discrimination; you wanted a society with freedom of worship; and you wanted a nation that could share in the growth and prosperity of a developing economy.

I come here today to say that there has been much progress.

Working together, we have achieved a lot in a relatively short space of time.

But we are also the first to admit that many challenges remain.

We acknowledge this because we have a duty binding on our collective conscience to always show absolute respect for the truth.

I have come, among other things, to enlist your support – in the spirit of Thuma Mina – to help us overcome the setbacks of recent times and to regain the momentum of progress.

I have seen with my own eyes that the spirit of volunteerism, which is essentially what Thuma Mina is about, abounds in the Muslim community.

I have no doubt that you will respond positively to this call and continue lending a hand to make the lives of others better.

Let us together, in brotherhood and sisterhood, demonstrate to the world that while we, as a nation, emerged from the ashes of a brutal and inhumane apartheid system, our humanity has not been and will never be diminished.

Our story as a people represents the triumph of the uncorrupted human spirit.

That means that we must work together to savecommunities that are ravaged by drugs, gangs and crime.

We must work together to reduce unemployment and the cost of living.

We must address the sense of alienation that many people feel as historical neighbourhoodslike the Bo-Kaap face gentrification and we must strive to ensure that District Six again becomes a vibrant centre of inclusive community life.

Some of you gathered here have said on other platforms that Cape Town seems to be continuing along the path of apartheid spatial planning and population distribution.

We have a responsibility to respond to this concern.

We are making good progress, together with the Muslim Judicial Council and the land claimants from Macassar to resolve the outstanding land claim and the establishment of a heritage site at the Sheik Yusuf Kramat.

The Ministers of Land Reform and Arts and Culture have met with the leadership of the MJC.

This is our heritage.

We must celebrate it and turn this site into a living centre where current and future generations can learn about our history.

We want learners from around the province and the country to visit this site to learn about the contribution made by this freedom fighter, Sheik Yusuf.

Next year we will also support the annual Sheik Yusuf festival.

Lets join hands and build a sustainable partnership around the Macassar project, which had huge opportunities for local economic development and jobs through tourism.

We want our friends from Malaysia and Indonesia and other countries to make a yearly pilgrimage to Macassar.

Let us be ready to receive them.

Friends and compatriots,

We have a responsibility to support those who feelpatronised, marginalised and humiliated by those who want to deny the role of coloureds, Indians and Africans in the development of sports like rugby and cricket for more than 100 years.

We must acknowledge with concern that the issue of the recognition of Muslim marriages has been drawn out for 24 years, and increasingly this is going to be a matter that the courts will decide in the absence of consensus between government and the Muslim community.

We must find a solution that will be consistent with both the best values of your faith and the fundamental principles of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.

If we are to ‘send you’ to build this country, thenwe must as the ANC admit that we may have disappointed you in recent times through the prevalence of corruption and neglect.

We are determined to obliterate those practices that serve only to erode our moral credibility as the leader of society.

We are resolute that we will take full advantage of the new spirit of hope and renewal that has engulfed our country to decisively root out corruption both in the public and private sectors.

Inspired by the decisions of our 54th National Conference, we are going back to our timeless values of selflessness, humility, hard work and respect for the people.

We are, in our daily conduct, driven by our desire to affirm practically our belief in the absolute necessity of ethical leadership, a belief we share with you and which has bound us together for many decades.

We would welcome the input of the Muslim Community on these and other matters as we approach the 2019 general elections so that we can properly plan the ANC’s priorities for the sixth administration.

These priorities must build also on the successes achieved by your community.

Our nation is grateful for the way Muslims each day make their contributions in every aspect of life.

Despite your relatively small numbers, your footprint is all over the professions of South Africa – from the judiciary to the health sciences to the education sector.

Your influence is felt in our economy – from the boardrooms to the factory floors.

We look to you to be part of the national effort to grow our economy, to generate investment and to create jobs.

There are many in this community that have the resources and the skills to be integrally involved in building an inclusive that serves all our people.

Your contribution is evident also in our culture – from your cuisine to your music to your faith.

These are all signs that South Africa does not merely tolerate its Muslim community, but genuinely embraces them and their religion.

We will never be a country that will allow discrimination of any sort.

In this regard, I commend the speedy response from both the Muslim Judicial Council and the Cape Accord in condemning any possible sectarian motives that may have been behind the gruesome attack at the Verulam Shia Mosque just as we were welcoming this holy month of Ramadan.

As Sheikh Nazeem’s prayer ended at the Union Buildings in May 1994, the newly inaugurated President, Nelson Mandela made a vow that:

“Never, never, and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world."

In the year of Madiba’s Centenary, I commend you for ensuring that we will not tolerate hate speech against us and by us; that we will not tolerate preachers of hate against our name and in our name, and that we will honour always the ethics of disagreement, the ethics that Islam pioneered in its theology and management of its own great internal diversity.

It is these ethics that allowed your religion to embrace every continent, and it is these ethics of diversity that we need to infuse in our own nation so that we can work for a non-racial, non-sexist, non-sectarian and united South Africa.

Let these values, which we all share, guide us as we reach out to our brothers and sisters across the world who continue to suffer oppression, exploitation and dispossession.

Let these values guide us in our support for the struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination, peace and justice.

May the month of Ramadan renew you as Muslims and renew our community.

May Ramadan remind you of the poor and may it strengthen our resolve as a nation to embrace transformation so that one day we may eliminate unemployment, poverty and inequality.

May God’s peace and mercy be upon you all, and always may God’s hand be on our beloved South African nation, diverse in our backgrounds, but united in our resolve to be free and equal.

I thank you.