

## SPEECH BY DAN PLATO

### FREEDOM OF ENTRY PARADE

Good day (INSERT Protocol)

A special welcome to Francis Carrington, ...[One of the oldest female volunteers in a South African military unit, Francis Carrington, 96, who fought as a, will be a special guest at the parade.

I just want to say how proud it makes me feel to see you here today. You are an awe-inspiring sight.

It is rare to see such practised and perfect discipline these days. It is something which I think we can all draw inspiration from, in whatever we do.

I want to thank you all for the important role you play in our city. One of Cape Town's many unique characteristics is that it has a very rich history. Cape Town has played a leading role in the story of South Africa for more than half a century. Our country has had an extraordinary story, and this has made Cape Town into an extraordinary City.

Our historic sites, such as the Castle of Good Hope here, and our beautiful buildings are a legacy which attracts people to Cape Town, and provide a continuous resource which drives our economy in many ways.

But seeing your march here today I realise that I am looking at something very different to an old building or what you read about in a book or brochure. I am looking at history brought to life by real live people in an extremely powerful, vibrant

and unique way. It is something which is of great value, and which we must treasure and appreciate.

In South Africa, it is often difficult to celebrate our history. We have to acknowledge that there are many things in our history which are shameful, and which leave deep scars today. But we cannot ignore our history. It belongs to us, and it affects our lives today whether we like it or not.

The challenge is to not to try and reject the past. We must recognise the good things our past has given us, and use them. We must find ways to rework the things which need to be changed.

One of the many good things our history has given us is the display we are seeing today. When you march like this, it stands for order over chaos, it tells us to take pride in ourselves, it brings us together as a nation. It inspires hope and courage and solidarity.

Military regiments work hard to maintain their traditions and honour their history. There is great strength to be found in this. But at the same time, you have also moved with the times. Our country wouldn't be where it is today if it wasn't for the professionalism and the genuine patriotism of the South African Defence force, who have maintained loyalty to our country's citizens and not to the political interests of former masters.

By keeping this careful balance between respecting your past and moving steadily into the future, you have shown us all how it should be done. You have shown South Africans how we should deal with our very difficult history.

One of the very important examples of this is the representation here today by large numbers of women. This is very encouraging, and I want to thank the women who have made it here today, because we know that our society still makes it very hard for women to be whatever they want to be.

I want to remind you all that the military provided one of the first places in which women could step into roles that had previously been restricted to men. Francis Carrington, who is with us today, was part of that change, when she fought as a gunner during World War II as one of the first female volunteers in a South African military unit.

The Freedom of Entry Award which we are celebrating today reminds us of the long and fruitful relationship our City has had with its military units. Many of these units have been comprised of volunteers in the past, which shows us how integrated they have been into the life of the City.

The Cape Garrison Artillery, which has gone from strength to strength even in the last few years, shows us the strength of that relationship, 150 years on. Thankfully, we no longer need to call on you to defend us against hostile invasion, but I am glad to know that you will always be there to protect our City against any danger.

And I am very grateful for the role you are starting to play in preparation for our hosting of the World Cup next year. We know that you will make us proud.