

Welcoming Address by SAVA Chairman Theo Stylianides

Mr Mtshali, Minister of Arts, Culture, Science and Technology of the Republic of South Africa; Mrs Olckers, MEC for Education and Culture of the Western Cape; Reverend Bantom, Mayor of the Cape Metropolitan Council; Mr Jacobs, Acting Mayor of Cape Town; Dr Dreyer, Secretary-General of FIAV; distinguished guests and delegates:

On behalf of the Southern African Vexillological Association I am honoured and delighted to welcome you all to Cape Town for the opening of the 17th International Congress of Vexillology which is being held under the distinguished patronage of President Nelson Mandela.

This is a fine opportunity for people from nearly twenty countries to share ideas and experience, and become better acquainted personally, factors which are of great importance for the future of vexillology. At the same time our overseas delegates will be able to enjoy this lively city and discover the charm and hospitality of the South African people. Please feel at home and do not hesitate to speak to the organisers and local delegates if you have any questions or problems.

The seed for this congress was sown five years ago during a visit to South Africa by one of the most eminent vexillologists of all time, Dr Whitney Smith, Executive Director of the Flag Research Center in the USA. At that time SAVA was in its infancy and the country was undergoing a major political transition. Naturally, we were apprehensive to undertake the organisation of an international congress of vexillology in South Africa. Dr Smith's encouragement, however, and the subsequent support of the vexillological community here and abroad, led to the acceptance of the challenge and to the fact that, as the current SAVA Chairman, I am fortunate to be welcoming you to the actual event. Incidentally, for those of our guests who only recently heard the word vexillology for the first time, it is worthwhile mentioning that this year marks the 40th anniversary of this term, and the person who coined it is none other than the same Dr Whitney Smith, who is amongst us here today.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the following: President Mandela, who graciously agreed to be the patron of the congress; Minister Mtshali, for agreeing to be here and for the generous contribution of his Department; our sponsors, without whose assistance this event would not have been possible; FIAV, for awarding this congress to SAVA; the ICV Organising Committee, under the direction of Mike Clingman, for their efforts to make this congress a reality; the SAVA and SAVA-Cape Management Committees and members; the authors and presenters of papers - in this regard it is, indeed, encouraging to see that one third of the papers deal with a Southern African topic; and all delegates and accompanying persons for their presence and support.

I wish you all an enjoyable and successful week. Thank you.