

Thought Piece: **MANDELA** **MONTH**



Inspiring SEZs to Live Up to the Ethos of Mandela Day

Every July, South Africa and the world pause to reflect on the enduring legacy of Nelson Mandela. Mandela Month is a time we recommit ourselves to the values of service, inclusivity, and nation-building that Madiba championed. At the OR Tambo Special Economic Zone (SEZ), we see this as an opportunity not only to honour Mandela's memory, but to embed his ethos into the fabric of our work, transforming intent into meaningful and tangible impact.

Our Purpose: Driving Inclusive Growth and Transformation

As an organisation, the OR Tambo SEZ is dedicated to advancing South Africa's industrialisation and economic transformation agenda. Our reason for being is rooted in fostering sustainable growth, promoting job creation, and building globally competitive industries anchored in Gauteng. We are driven by a vision to create a thriving industrial hub that not only attracts investment but also empowers communities, develops local skills, and nurtures innovation. By focusing on strategic sectors such as advanced manufacturing, logistics, and technology, we aim to position Gauteng as a leader in Africa's industrial landscape.

In line with Mandela's vision for an equitable society, we are committed to ensuring that the benefits of industrial development reach all South Africans, especially those in historically marginalised communities. Our initiatives are purposefully designed to break down barriers to entry, foster meaningful participation from micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and create opportunities for youth and women in the economy. Through targeted programmes that support skills development, enterprise growth, and local supplier integration, we strive to create an inclusive ecosystem where everyone can contribute to and benefit from economic progress.



Ultimately, our work at the OR Tambo SEZ is guided by a deep sense of responsibility to drive sustainable transformation that uplifts people, strengthens the economy, and honours the legacy of leaders like Nelson Mandela. We believe that industrial excellence and social impact go hand in hand, and we remain steadfast in our commitment to building a better, more inclusive future for all.

Empowering MSMEs: Impactful Leadership in Action

Mandela believed in the power of ordinary people to achieve extraordinary things. At the OR Tambo SEZ, we embrace this principle by prioritising the growth and integration of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) into our industrial ecosystem.

Our initiatives are designed to provide MSMEs with access to markets, skills development, mentorship, and supply chain opportunities. Empowering them to thrive alongside established industry players. This Mandela month, our commitment to MSME growth was on display at the 2nd International SEZ Infrastructure and Investment Conference. Four of our MSMEs, Khoi Tech, Isondo Precious Metals, Origin Coffee, and Creinex Management were invited to exhibit their products at the conference's exhibition.

This platform provided these innovative companies with invaluable exposure to potential partners, investors, and industry leaders. Their booths attracted significant attention, with some companies receiving special visits from South Africa's Deputy President, Mr Paul Mashatile, Minister Parks Tau of the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition, and former Gauteng Premier, Mr David Makhura. The presence of these MSMEs at the conference not only expanded their footprint to international delegates but also resulted in valuable media exposure and direct sales. Their respected brands captured the interest of both local

underscores the transformative impact that active support and strategic platforms can have on emerging businesses. The success of these companies underpins achievements like this, motivating us to continue setting the benchmark for industrial excellence, supporting advanced manufacturing, promoting high-value exports, and creating meaningful job opportunities. As we look ahead, we remain steadfast in our commitment to contributing to Gauteng's competitiveness and South Africa's broader industrialisation agenda.

Leadership that Reflects Mandela's Legacy

Our leadership at the OR Tambo SEZ is deeply inspired by Mandela's example of integrity, resilience, and servant leadership. We are committed to transparent governance, ethical decision-making, and building trust with all our stakeholders. By uplifting MSMEs and fostering a culture of collaboration, we strive to create a model for industrial development that leaves no one behind. Nelson Mandela taught us that we all have the responsibility to make a difference, by supporting local businesses and investing in our communities, we are building a legacy of hope and opportunity for all.

This Mandela Month, we invite all partners, investors, and community members to join us in living up to the ethos of Mandela Day. Let us work together to create opportunities, support local enterprises, and build an economic future defined by inclusion and shared success. At the OR Tambo SEZ, we remain dedicated to walking in the footsteps of Madiba, making every day a Mandela Day through impactful action and visionary leadership.