FACT SHEET ON NATIONAL IDENTITY

1. BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

a) South Africa, like many African countries, emerged from an oppressive, divisive and colonial system which created a fragmented society. The country was divided by race, class, gender and other forms of segregation such as urban and rural settings. The rural areas were characterised by conditions of severe poverty, poor living conditions, landlessness, lack of opportunities to improve the lives of the majority people. The system fragmented the country into enclaves designed to foster ethnicity, linguistic and tribalism. The majority of the population were denied the right to representation in national government. Participation in all aspects of national life was reserved to a minority sector of the population.

b) Nation building became a central focus after 1994 and to achieve this vision, national symbols of the new South Africa had to be established to convey identity of the country and its people as critical elements on national identity.

c) Each and every country in the world has national symbols. The raising of the new flag always marks the birth of a new country. This also happened in South Africa in 1994 when this country marked the passage from the apartheid era into democracy.

d) National symbols are not decorative artworks that adorn official letterheads and government buildings but are strong symbolic statements adopted by each country and its people as elements of national identity.

1.1. Expression Of Identity

National symbols, such as the flag, become the brand image of a country. The flag, for example, becomes the face of the nation in world events such as Olympic. The National Anthem is the very expressive of them all.

It is an expression by people of the love and loyalty to their country. National pride and solidarity is expressed with deep emotions of the love and passion.

1.2. Marking Events In History

The history of a country permeates through its national symbols. The launch of the new National Flag of South Africa, for example, was a historical land mark symbolizing the demise of apartheid.

The South African national anthem does reveal a history of a once fragmented society. This can be traced from the history of the “Die Stem” and “Nkosi”. Both anthems use to serve different communities. The combination of these two anthems marks a time in history where unity, nation building and social cohesion have taken a centre.
To this effect, both the flag and the anthem urges us to value our democracy and never to aspire to our divided past.

1.3. Unification Role/ Nation Building

National Symbols have a unifying role as they present the citizens of each country with the common identity.

The National Anthem demonstrates this through its content. Our Anthem is a prayer for blessings, and the appreciation of our natural resources. We as people come together in petitioning for the goodwill of our continent as well as our country. It should be noted that our Anthem is not only focus on South Africa as a country but is petitioning for the blessings and wellbeing of the whole African continent. This is in realization that we are part of the bigger setting, our success being dependent to the success of the whole continent. The African Union Flag and Anthem also play part in advancing social cohesion in South Africa as we are a country with diverse people.

The flag design emphasizes unity through the converging lines and multi-colour evoking the ‘rainbow nation’ concept. The national coat of arms expresses this in a motto, urge us to unite.

1.4. Vision and objectives of the nation

Symbols can be a statement of intent and a road map in which a particular country would like to take. The South African flag demonstrate this with the convergence of two separate lines that is united to one and move forward in unison. The Anthem, in the other hand, is projecting on a blessed continent with prosperity. Furthermore, our Anthem is also in complement with the AU Anthem, which projects the vision of Africa as a tree of life.

The issue of identity is but one of the major roles of the national symbols. Studying the three primary national symbols of South Africa (the flag, Anthem and the coat of arms) one would observe a consistent concepts - that of unity in diversity, nation building and social cohesion.

1.5. Classification Of National Symbols

Primary National Symbols
- National Coat of Arms
- National Flag
- National Anthem

Secondary National Symbols
- National Animal – Springbok
- National Fish – Galjoen
- National Flower - King Protea
- National Tree - Yellowwood tree
- National Bird - Blue Crane

Ceremonial Symbols

- Mace
- Black Rod

National Orders

- The Order of Mapungubwe
- The Order of the Companions of OR Tambo
- The Order of Mendi for Bravery
- The order of Baobab
- The Order of Ikhamanga
- The Order of Luthuli

a) The National Coat of Arms

The National Coat of Arms is the highest symbol of the State. The Coat of Arms was launched on Freedom Day, 27 April 2000. A central image of the Coat of Arms is the well-known secretary bird with its uplifted wings.

Symbolism of the Coat of Arms

- Above the bird is the rising sun, a force that gives life while representing the flight of darkness and the triumph of discovery, knowledge and understanding of things that have been hidden, and illuminating the new life that is coming into being.
- Below the bird is the protea, an indigenous flower of South Africa, which represents beauty, the aesthetic harmony of all its cultures, and South Africa flowering as a nation.
- The ears of wheat are emblems of the fertility of the land. The elephant tusks symbolise wisdom, steadfastness and strength.
- At the centre stands a shield, which signifies the protection of South Africans from one generation to the next.
- Above it is a spear and a knobkerrie. Together, they assert the defence of peace rather than a posture of war.
- This shield of peace, which also brings to mind an African drum, conveys the message of a people imbued with a love of culture.
- Contained within the shield are some of the earliest representations of humanity in the world. Those depicted were the very first inhabitants of the land, namely the Khoisan people.
- These figures are derived from images on the Linton Stone, a world-famous example of South African rock art.
- The motto - !KE E: /XARRA //KE, written in the Khoisan language of the /Xam people, means ‘diverse people unite’.

b) The National Flag

The unique central design of the flag, which begins as a “V” at the flag-post and comes together in the centre of the flag, extending further as a single horizontal band to the outer edge of the fly, can be seen as representing the convergence of diverse elements in South African society, which then take the road ahead in unison. This idea also links up with the motto of the new National Coat of Arms, namely !ke e: /xarra //ke, in the language of the /Xam San people, which literally means “diverse people unite”.

There is no official symbolism of the colours, except that it depicts unified diversity.

Etiquettes or flag guidelines

- The Flag must not touch the floor or the ground.
- The Flag must be not used as a tablecloth or be draped in front of a platform.
- The Flag must not be used to cover a statue, plaque, cornerstone, etc. at unveiling or similar ceremonies.
- The Flag must not be used to start or finish any competition, race or similar event

Correct Usage

- When the flag is hoisted on a flagpole, the red band must be the uppermost and the black triangle must be on the side of the pole or hoist.
- When it is displayed horizontally against a wall, the hoist should be to the left of the spectator and the red band uppermost.
- When the National Flag is displayed vertically against a wall, the red band should be to the left of the spectator with the hoist or the cord seam uppermost.
Flying the flag

When the flag is displayed vertically against a wall, the red band should be to the left of the viewer with the hoist or the cord seam at the top. When it is displayed horizontally, the hoist should be to the left of the viewer and the red band at the top. When the flag is displayed next to or behind the speaker at a meeting, it must be placed to the speaker's right. When it is placed elsewhere in the meeting place, it should be to the right of the audience.

Times when the National Flag should be flown

- The standard size National Flag should be flown daily from sunrise to sunset on outside flag pole at all flag stations.
- The National flag should be flown at all buildings where head offices of Government Departments and Provincial Legislative Authorities are housed, and it is also flown illuminated at night except where this is impossible like at privately owned buildings which are shared by private bodies;
- All official residences of Members of Cabinet, Premiers and Deputy Ministers; the storm flag measuring 90 cm x 60 cm is flown in stormy weather;
- The flying of the National flag may be limited to the normal office hours at those flag stations where circumstances necessitate such limitations;
- Foreign offices of the Republic may vary the times when the National Flag should be flown in accordance with local practice and circumstances; and
- The National Flag can also be displayed in entrance halls, conference rooms and certain offices at flag stations.

c) National Anthem

*Nkosi sikelel' iAfrika*
Maluphakanyiswa' uphondo lwayo,
Yizwa imithandazo yethu,
Nkosi sikelela, thina lusapho lwayo.

Morena boloka setjhaba sa heso,
O fedise dintwa la matshwenyeho,
O se boloke, O se boloke setjhaba sa heso,
Setjhaba sa South Afrika - South Afrika.

*Uit die blou van onse hemel,*
*Uit die diepte van ons see,*
*Oor ons ewige gebergtes,*
*Waar die kranse antwoord gee,*

*Sounds the call to come together,*
*And united we shall stand,*
*Let us live and strive for freedom,*
*In South Africa our land.*
The History of the National Anthem

- The National Anthem was proclaimed in 1997.
- It is a shortened, combined version of two anthems (‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’ and ‘The Call of South Africa’/’Die van Suid-Afrika’); sung between 1994 and 1997.
- It is unique in that it is sung in five languages.
- The length of the Anthem is about 1h45 seconds

The Composers

‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’ was composed in 1897 by Enoch Sontonga, a Methodist mission schoolteacher. The poet Samuel Mqhayi later added seven additional stanzas in isiXhosa. A Sesotho version was published by Moses Mphahlele in 1942.

‘Nkosi Sikelel’ iAfrika’ became a popular church hymn that was later adopted as an anthem at political meetings and was sung as an act of defiance during the apartheid years. ‘Die Stem van Suid-Afrika’ is a poem written by CJ Langenhoven in May 1918, with music composed in 1921 by the Reverend ML de Villiers.

It was first sung publicly at the official hoisting of the national flag in Cape Town on 31 May 1928. It was not until 2 May 1957 that government pronounced Die Stem as the official national anthem of South Africa. In 1952, the official English version, ‘The Call of South Africa’, was accepted for official use.

The correct etiquette of singing the national anthem

Protocol on respecting the National Anthem

The National Anthem should be recited with appropriate respect

- All should stand to attention with their hands placed at their sides while singing the National Anthem.
- Civilians should take their hats off as a sign of respect
- There should be no movement and chewing of gum during the singing of the Anthem.
- It is important that the Anthem should be sung to its fullness, and should not be interrupted, even at its conclusion.

To continue promoting our common National Identity towards a Social Cohesive Nation as mandated by the Government, the Department of Arts and Culture has partnered with SABC Education to roll-out a comprehensive campaign to ensure that this ideal is achieved through various platforms and channels. Through this partnership, the department envisages to reach All South Africans, public schools, the young & the old, different racial groups, civil organisations or formations including business in attempt to strengthen relations amongst fellow South Africans towards a common identity. The Campaign will be launched on 04 February 2016.