

FOUNDING SPEECH GIVEN BY PATRON NELSON ROLIHLAHLA MANDELA

*At a gathering of Rhodes Scholars to celebrate a centenary of the Rhodes Trust,
Westminster Hall, 2 July 2003*

‘Let our peoples, the ones formerly poor citizens and the others good patricians – politicians, business people, educators, health workers, scientists, engineers and technicians, sports people and entertainers, activists for charitable relief – join hands to build on what we have achieved together and help construct a humane African world, whose emergence will say a new order is born in which we are each our brother’s keeper.

‘And so let that outcome, as we open a millennium, herald the advent of a glorious summer of a partnership for freedom, peace, prosperity and friendship.

‘Today we celebrate a century of achievement by the Rhodes Trust through the founding of a new initiative based on a new partnership.

‘Bringing together those two names represents a symbolic moment in the closing of the historic circle. And we know with confidence that The Mandela Rhodes Foundation will substantively contribute to a better life for the people of South Africa and the African continent.

‘It was in South Africa that Cecil John Rhodes made most of the money which he left in legacy for scholars from across the world to benefit from for the past hundred years.

‘It speaks of a growing sense of global responsibility that in this second century of its operations the Rhodes Trust finds it appropriate to redirect attention and resources back to the origin of that wealth.

‘We can only imagine how Rhodes himself would have identified with this decision to develop human capacity in modern-day South Africa, enabling that country to continue being a competitive presence in the world as it was during his times.

‘We are mindful of the honour and significance attached to our name in this joining up with that of Cecil John Rhodes. We recognise that the name and person of Mandela are being accorded historic symbolism in this new initiative.

‘We shall be truly honoured if all who use our name in praise do so in full recognition that what is accorded Mandela should stand for every single South African and African. We would feel demeaned if adulation paid to us is to set us apart from the masses from which we come and in whose name we achieved whatever it is we are deemed to have achieved.

‘Ours is the name for the labourer who toils on the African farm, fighting for a life of dignity; the girl child battling against great odds for an opportunity to realise her potential; the poor AIDS orphan bereft of family or care; the rural poor eking out a subsistence, deprived of the most basic services and facilities. It is in their names and those of others like them, and in the name of all South Africans, that we lend ours to this initiative, seeking that a better future be built for all of them.

‘In this, I am certain, Cecil John Rhodes and I would have made common cause.’

Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, Westminster Hall, London, 2nd July 2003