

Rainbow Nation celebrates cultural diversity, inclusivity

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On Saturday, Sept. 24, people across South Africa celebrate Heritage Day, launched in 1994 to recognize and celebrate its cultural diversity as the foundation of all communities in the country.

“Heritage Day is a very important day for South Africa, a cosmopolitan, multicultural country, said South African Ambassador to Japan, Mr. Lulama Smuts Ngonyama, in an interview.

The Ambassador said: “South Africa is a melting pot of cultures and communities. That’s why in the Constitution of South Africa we have 11 official languages, representing different people and their cultures.” South Africa’s 11 languages include Xhosa, Zulu, Pedi, Afrikaans, English, Sotho, Tswana, Swazi, Venda, Tsonga and Ndebele cultures.

Furthermore, Ambassador Ngonyama shared that South Africa’s Constitution of 1996, adopted two years after the country’s first nonracial general elections in 1994, ensures that all South Africans recognize the 11 official languages to instill dignity and pride in all South Africans.

The term “Rainbow Nation” was coined by the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu following the first democratic elections in 1994, and was further elaborated on by the late President Mandela when he proclaimed that “Each of us is as intimately attached to the soil of this beautiful country as are the famous jacaranda trees of Pretoria and the mimosa trees of the bushveld – a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.”

This spirit of inclusivity is further reflected in South Africa’s Coat of Arms, which is inscribed with the following inscription: “!ke e: /xarra //ke” meaning “diverse people unite.” This is written in the Khoisan language of the /Xam people and addresses each individual effort to harness the unity between thought and action.

Speaking about the diversity of the South African nation, Ambassador



Photo by Tomoko Hagimoto

South African Ambassador to Japan Lulama Smuts Ngonyama and his wife Nokwazi Ngonyama wearing Xhosa traditional attire at the Embassy of South Africa in Tokyo

Ngonyama further explained that each South African cultural group has its own unique customs and traditions, cuisine, indigenous music and dress code.

For purposes of the event, Ambassador Ngonyama and his spouse, Mrs. Nokwazi Ngonyama, were both dressed in their traditional Xhosa tribal attire.

Ambassador Ngonyama spoke about the important role of heritage celebrations in nation-building in South Africa. He also focused on the role that sport plays in this regard and mentioned that Japan held a special place in the hearts and minds of South Africans, as the Springbok rugby team was crowned World Champions here in 2019. In general, sport has the ability to unite people and in South Africa, where sport is entrenched in the nation’s psyche, this is no exception. South Africans are firmly united behind their national teams, be it rugby, cricket, soccer or even individual sport stars.

In speaking about South African heritage and culture, Ambassador Ngonyama also noted that the month of September is tourism month in

South Africa and spoke about the South African Government’s approach to reviving the South African tourism industry, which was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ambassador Ngonyama indicated that prior to COVID-19, tourist arrivals from Japan had reached 30,000 in 2019, and that the South African Government was intent on “once again attracting foreign tourists.”

Ambassador Ngonyama noted that as it pertains to tourism, South Africa has much to offer. Ambassador Ngonyama spoke of South Africa’s eight world heritage sites; and noted that South Africa is also the most mega-biodiverse country in the world, with abundant fauna and flora. Some of South Africa’s iconic tourist attractions, include Table Mountain in the city of Cape Town and Robben Island in Western Cape — where Nelson Mandela was jailed for 18 of his 27 years behind bars. He also spoke of the splendor of the South African coastline from the Western Cape to Durban in KwaZulu-Natal; he spoke of the Drakensberg mountains and the Namaqualand, an arid inland region,



Courtesy of SA Tourism

Canoeing adventures at the Tsitsikamma National Park, Eastern Cape Province



Photo by Tomoko Hagimoto

Proudly South African Traditional dishes: Spinach, Somp and beans, Chakalaka, Hardbody chicken, Braai meat, Pap (Maize meal porridge), served with South African wine

and he spoke of the abundant wildlife and the attractiveness of Safari tours in places like the Kruger National Park, and the Pilianesberg — just to name a few.

In short Ambassador Ngonyama noted that South Africa offers international tourists a wide variety of options,

from city life to adventure, wildlife to culture, breath-taking scenery to sun-soaked coasts. He added that South Africa is a world-class tourist destination, and that tourists from all over the world visit to explore the beautiful scenery of South Africa and to experience the country’s diverse and im-

How to prepare spinach the South African way:

- Wash and chop one bunch of spinach.
- Boil the spinach for 3 minutes and drain the water.
- Fry 1/4 chopped onion, 1/4 red and 1/4 yellow pepper with oil for 2 minutes.
- Add garlic spice, salt and pepper for flavor.
- When ready, add the spinach and stir for 3 minutes.
- Dish may be served with pap/samp.

pressive culture.

This rich tapestry, interwoven together, is what makes South Africa so uniquely beautiful. Ambassador Ngonyama concluded with an invitation to the Japanese people to visit South Africa and to explore its wonders.