

**WELCOMING ADDRESS TO THE 1996  
MICROLIGHT AND POWERED PARAGLIDING  
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP  
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Ladies and gentlemen it is a great honour to open the 1996 Microlight and Powered Paragliding World Championship which brings together more than 120 participants, representing more than 13 countries from all over the world. I am delighted by the fact that you have chosen South Africa for the holding of your bi-annual world competition, and I am especially pleased that you have selected KwaZulu Natal's Valley of a Thousand Hills.

I am one of those who has long been enchanted by the unparalleled beauty and the inexpressible magics of this valley, in which each hill runs after the other almost as if they were musical notes in a Bach's fugue? I have often fantasised what it would be like to be able to fly across these hills at a high speed and a low altitude, so as to grasp within the single image of the mind the intricate tapestry of beauty this place holds. I must say that my heart rejoices in thinking that today the participants of the Microlight and Powered and Paragliding World Competition will be able to see for themselves that of which I have so often dreamed, and I hope that by the end of the day some of you will be able to tell me whether, from up there in the sky, the Valley of a Thousand Hills expresses for you the same poetry which it holds in my imagination.



The Microlight World Championship was originally supposed to take place in South Africa in 1994 and your coming here was postponed because our Country at the time was going through the uncertainty of a difficult electoral process. As you all know, in 1994 we held our first democratic elections against the background of unresolved political conflict and constitutional disputes. Aware of those conflicts the organisers of your championship chose to postpone holding this important event in South Africa for two years, and I hope that those who have come from abroad will now find in South Africa, and in KwaZulu Natal in particular, the warmth of our hospitality.

After having been secluded from the rest of the international community for so many years, South Africa has now rejoined with great enthusiasm international sporting events. We were delighted to host the Rugby World Cup last year and it is with great pride that we sent our delegation to Atlanta to participate in the Olympic Games. The Rugby World Cup and the Olympic Games have been widely publicised events through which the South African people have learned again a lesson which many people in our Country had forgotten: the lesson that we share a common and inseverable humanity and we are all apart of the brotherhood of mankind. I believe that even though today's event might not receive the same publicity as the Olympic Games, we today are still celebrating the same spirit and, at least as far as I am concerned, we are doing so with the same enthusiasm.

South Africa's past carries the legacy of a divided society which made man the enemy of man and filled our communities with hate and despair. The armed struggle for power which was waged in South Africa and especially in KwaZulu Natal has torn entire communities apart, dehumanising the lives of the people and teaching them a deplorable culture of violence, intimidation and



prevarication. The armed struggle has often taught a brother to hate and kill his brother, while poverty and despair has driven large masses of our population astray from the values which we received from our forefathers, pushing them onto a downhill path to criminality and selfishness.

As we rebuild our Country, we hold as our highest priority the need of promoting a new culture of respect, tolerance and universal brotherhood. For this reason, I believe that on this day, our participants in this Championship are doing much more than competing in the sporting discipline of their choice, for the pleasure of their own achievements and for our delight. In fact, unbeknown to them they are also a part of a healing process of historical dimensions which is taking place in our Country, and in which sporting events are bringing people together to compete without hating, to win without defeating, and to participate with our opponents in a common endeavour through which celebrates our common humanity and our dedication to a sporting discipline.

The land over which you will be flying is still plagued by conflict and violence. In fact, as you may know this region, more than any other in South Africa, has paid the highest toll of lives and human suffering because of the political violence which erupted during the early 1980's when the armed struggle set for itself the goal of making our Country ungovernable. You will be looking at this land from the sky and to you it will appear glorious in its beauty, for the beauty of nature has the glory of God, and always remains uncontaminated by human suffering.

The remote viewpoint of an observer placed high in the sky holds a quintessential truth which I hope one day will be able to conquer the hearts and the minds of the people of this region. From the sky



no one can see the boundaries of no-go areas and of political divisions, and all people look equally important. I will never forget the spontaneous remarks of John Glenn the United States astronaut who, being one of the first to look upon the globe from an orbit, when asked what the planet looked like he stated that it was remarkable without boundaries.

I am fascinated by your sport and I hope that because of this competition it will catch on in South Africa more than it has. Even though I have never been in a microlight myself, and I must say I would one day very much wish to do so, I would imagine that your aircrafts get as close as possible to the ever present dream of man to fly with its own wings. In Europe and the United States microlites are becoming increasingly more affordable while in South Africa their price still prohibits most of the population. However, the dream of flying is such an irresistible one that I am sure we will see more microflights even in our country.

I wish the success of your competition and good luck to all the pilots. The people of this Province are delighted to have you here and our land is graced by your presence. I am sure that the memory of the graceful flights of your aircrafts will accompany for a long time the people looking at you from below. I hope that those who have come to KwaZulu Natal from far afield will keep the memory of this day and the memory of this place as a treasured one. All the pilots who are participating in this competition are surely the best for precision, accuracy and navigational skills. All of them are winners in their own right and to all of them I wish the best of luck and many safe and happy landings.

I thank you