Minister of State Security, Dr. Siyabonga Cwele and all Ministers and deputy ministers present;
Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing committee on Intelligence;
Veterans of Intelligence;
Fellow South Africans,

Good day to you all.

We have come together on this annual National Intelligence Service Day, to pay homage to members of the Intelligence Community who have given loyal and distinguished service to our country.

These are South Africans who have worked diligently to ensure the security and stability of the country and the safety and well being of the South African people.

It is both a commemoration and a celebration. We are celebrating the contribution of many, while mourning the loss of those who have passed on.

All have contributed immensely to the consolidation of our country’s young democracy and the protection of this country and its people.

This year’s commemoration is held during an important month in the liberation heritage calendar of the country.

As you are aware, part of the country’s transformation process entails recognising all heroes and heroines who contributed to building this free and democratic South Africa that we are so proud to call home.

Today on the 10th of April, we remember Mr Chris Hani, the former ANC MK chief of staff and general secretary of the SACP, who was killed mercilessly at his home in Boksburg.

On that tragic day and for days thereafter, the country stood on the brink of total mayhem due to the untold anger and frustration nationwide. Anything was possible.

But South Africans working together, focused on the need to move ahead to achieve what Mr Hani had lived for - a free and just society which upholds the human rights of all.
In April we also remember a colossal freedom fighter, statesman and national hero, Mr Oliver Reginald Tambo. He taught us that working together, we can build the non-racial, non-sexist, democratic and prosperous South Africa we all desire, regardless of political affiliation, race, or creed.

He is remembered during this month as he passed on, on the 24th of April 1993, very close to the dawn of freedom.

It is in that context that today, we come together to honour the contribution and role of the intelligence community in the strengthening of our young democracy.

We do so remembering that we are a nation that achieved freedom and democracy through the sacrifices of many selfless South Africans.

Compatriots,

Today we also honour the late Dr Sizakele Sigxashe, the first Director General of the National Intelligence Agency, who passed on last year.

He dedicated his life to serving the people of South Africa with pride, efficiency and diligence. He remains a powerful role model for all within the intelligence community.

The garden of remembrance here serves as a reminder of many others who have passed on, whose memories and the cause they served will remain etched in our hearts. These include the field operatives who remain unsung heroes and heroines.

Compatriots,

Our meeting today underscores the fact that intelligence and security services are key and important components of a State.

Intelligence service work involves secret work which may, at face value, appear to outsiders to be unrelated to government objectives.

We still need to raise awareness that intelligence work is actually intended to advance government programmes and objectives. It is not just smoke and mirrors, spies and cameras as it is made out to be!

The intelligence community, as part of the security cluster, has to achieve the objective of ensuring that all South Africans feel safe and are safe.

This objective, which is the core outcome in the delivery agreement of the security cluster, is derived from the Constitution of the Republic.
The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa enjoins the state security agencies to assist Government efforts of ensuring that, “South Africans as individuals and as a nation, live as equals in peace and harmony and are free from fear and want…”

Your task is therefore a critical one as it is not about serving narrow personal or partisan interests, but those of the entire nation.

The Constitution of the Republic is also very explicit with regards to the mandate of our security services.

It states that the security services must act, teach and require their members to act, in accordance with the Constitution and the law, including customary international law and international agreements binding on the Republic.

The Constitution also states explicitly that no member of any security service may obey a manifestly illegal order.

In addition, the security services are barred from undertaking any work that may prejudice a legitimate political party or which promotes, in a partisan manner, any interest of a political party.

Our progressive Constitution also directs that there be oversight to ensure transparency and accountability.

Multi-party parliamentary committees have oversight of all security services in a manner determined by national legislation or the rules and orders of Parliament.

There are enough checks and balances to ensure that in undertaking the necessary work of protecting national security and making the population feel and be safe, we uphold the Constitution at all times.

Having said that, let me also emphasise that the democratic State led by the African National Congress, will never undertake any activity or pass any law that undermines the security of the South African people, or which violates their Constitutional rights.

We are guided by the Constitution at all times, working in cooperation with the other arms of the state, the judiciary and the legislature, in a separate but equal cooperative relationship.

Compatriots,

National Intelligence Service Day is a day of reflection and renewal by our intelligence services.

The following questions are relevant as you reflect on your role as you participate in the drive to improve the quality of life of all South Africans:
How does the intelligence service of our country contribute meaningfully to the realisation of the ideals of building a better life for all, as outlined in the programme of action of government?

What supporting role will the intelligence community play in ensuring that government deals decisively with the triple challenges of unemployment, poverty and inequality?

In addition, your work goes beyond the domestic environment.

But talking about the domestic environment is neither here nor there for the intelligence community in the current global situation.

The radical transformation occurring globally has narrowed the distinction between foreign and domestic threats.

World borders are now softer than ever.

Whether it is transnational crime, terrorism or the global political situation, the international security situation requires all states to remain vigilant and to cooperate in protecting respective national security interests and their citizens.

There have been other developments as well, especially in the African continent last year.

The Arab Spring that changed the political landscape of North Africa demonstrated how the 21st century environment is rapidly changing.

The incidents in North Africa points to new dimensions of conflicts from which we have to draw lessons, for example the manner in which foreign powers pursue their regime change agenda at all cost.

Therefore, our ability to deliver on the national objectives is closely related to our ability to understand and influence the external environment.

This is more important in light of our mission to push the African agenda and to strengthen the African Union.

Our mission remains to create a Better South Africa and to contribute to a Better and Safer Africa in a Better World.

The State Security Agency must deploy its resources and tradecraft to assist Government to comprehend these intricate issues in order to have a competitive edge in its international work.

Compatriots, ladies and gentlemen,
Let me thank the members of the State Security Agency for having maintained the highest levels of integrity, discipline and professionalism despite the demands placed upon you by the task of restructuring the state security architecture over the past two years.

The restructuring was informed by the desire to improve the capacity and quality of intelligence in a radically changing global environment. The events of the past year demonstrate that the restructuring was necessary indeed.

To the intelligence veterans, we applaud the role you played in helping to transform what was once an Intelligence Service with a repressive agenda, to one that upholds a new democratic dispensation.

To the entire intelligence service, it is indeed a privilege and great honour for all of you to be afforded the opportunity to work in such a profession, and to serve the people of South Africa.

I urge you to pick up where those before you left off, and continue to serve the country with pride and integrity.

We wish all of you a very happy and successful National Intelligence Service Day.

I thank you.