

**ADDRESS BY THE MINISTER OF WATER AFFAIRS & FORESTRY,  
RONNIE KASRILS DURING THE EVENT OF THE FAREWELL OF THE  
EARTHWALKER MR PAUL COLEMAN ON 18 MAY 2003 AT BEIT  
BRIDGE, MUSINA**

Honourable Minister of Environmental Affairs of Zimbabwe, Comrade Francis Nhema and your esteemed delegation, the Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs of South Africa Comrade Rejoice Mabudfhasi, MEC for Local Government in the Limpopo Province Comrade Joe Maswanganye, the Mayors of Musina and Vhembe District Municipality, comrades, friends, compatriots of both Zimbabwe and South Africa, I am very honored to be speaking at this international event today.

This day on which we entrust the Earthwalker, Paul Coleman, to our trusted friends in Zimbabwe and other countries in Africa, as he embarks on his way to China, is indeed a great day for the continent. We are sure that he will receive the hospitality and protection that he experienced in South Africa. We have certainly been blessed by his presence over the last 10 months and are proud to be associated with him and the ideals he stands for. At the same time we are sad to see him leaving as he deeply touched us with his approach to a seriously needed message for the world. We are, however, happy to know that Paul is going through our neighbouring country of Zimbabwe, and will be making his way up our beautiful continent, and we know that he will be well received, with a true African welcome wherever he goes.

Paul Coleman became an Earthwalker when he walked from Canada to the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit a decade ago, promoting awareness of environmental issues. Since then he has walked over 38 000 km through many countries of the globe,

tirelessly spreading the word, “Our environment is crucial to our survival as a species and tree planting and care is one positive action we can all take.”

Paul came to South Africa in July 2002, where he linked with Food and Trees for Africa and started a 700km walk from Hilton, KwaZulu Natal, where he planted a tree with me. Through his contact with my department, he has been planting trees along the route and inspiring people to environmental action through his storytelling abilities as he walked to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. With, international delegates and Food and Trees for Africa and myself, he planted an olive tree to symbolise a peaceful and fruitful summit on 24 August at Ubuntu Village, Johannesburg.

As he hikes along the highways and by-ways he comes into contact with many people and advances ecological practices that help communities and individuals exist in a sustainable manner. The ideas, technologies and programmes he promotes are of particular use to the poorest communities as they utilize existing resources. He also teaches ways to build, produce food, maintain health and conserve water that are practical and inexpensive. He also links local communities with local and international organisations and networks that specialise in sustainable development.

The Earthwalker planted a tree on Robben Island in September 2002 and started a walk from Nelson Mandela’s cell that is taking him from the Cape to Cairo to China where he hopes to end his walk in 2007. Since the summit, Paul Coleman has been planting trees around South Africa and talking to communities from all sectors. In the past few months he has planted trees at Parliament where he addressed many MPs, and from there with Mayors, Ministers, companies, schools and township communities. His message is simple and pure and he is carrying it from the Johannesburg summit. In all he has walked over 3 000 kms through South Africa and with communities planted over 20 000 trees

Throughout his stay in South Africa the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry assisted him by allocating staff to follow him along his route and to supply trees for

events wherever they took place. The South African Police Service also took an interest in his safety.

We also have committed ourselves to track Paul on his journey through Africa and to assist him wherever we can by informing the relevant Ministries in the countries on route to Egypt. Paul's progress will be displayed on the website of the Ministry of Water Affairs and Forestry in South Africa.

I plan to meet up with Paul upon his arrival in Shanghai, People's Republic of China sometime in 2007. Already there is a promise of a festival on his arrival that will be hosted by Minister of Forestry in China to whom I was able to introduce him at the Johannesburg World Summit.

With all the above said and done Paul is now set to leave South Africa. From our side we want to thank him for what he did in our country. We want to send him on his way with the sincere wishes that he gets the same warm co-operation from the governments, officials and communities alike in Zimbabwe and all the African countries that he will be walking through.

With these words it is our great honour to hand him over to our colleague, the Honourable Minister of Environmental Affairs comrade Francis Nhema who receives Paul Coleman on this historic bridge over the Limpopo River. Earthwalker extraordinaire Paul Coleman, who we can now call a true son of Africa's soil, leaves South Africa and enters the beautiful, independent African State of Zimbabwe.

Minister let me express the wish that Zimbabwe enjoys Paul's sojourn as we South Africans did, and that when he has passed through your beautiful country you will hand him on to our counterparts in Zambia.

Thank you. Hamba Kahle, Paul.