STATEMENT BY THE MAYOR OF ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY, CLLR CYRIL XABA, AT THE POST-COUNCIL MEDIA BRIEFING EXCO BOARDROOM, DURBAN CITY HALL, 11H00

- Programme Director;
- City Manager of the eThekwini Municipality: Mr Musa Mbhele;
- Members of the Media;

Good morning, and thank you for joining us.

Today I wish to update residents on the water situation in the City and to outline the key decisions Council took to improve services, attract investment and grow the local economy.

1. WATER AND SANITATION

As we reflect on the 2021-2026 term of local government, it is important to acknowledge that this has been one of the most challenging periods in the history of our city. EThekwini was called upon to confront a series of unprecedented crises, including the July 2021 unrest, the devastating April

2022 floods and subsequent severe weather events that caused damage running into billions of rands.

The April 2022 floods, in particular, represented a disaster of historic proportions. No metropolitan municipality in democratic South Africa has faced destruction on this scale in a single event, with critical water, sanitation, roads, bridges and electricity infrastructure severely damaged across the city.

Yet, despite these immense challenges, the City did not retreat from its responsibilities. Under our leadership, supported by dedicated municipal officials, provincial and national government, the Municipality remained resolute in its commitment to rebuilding eThekwini. The road to recovery has not been easy, but the progress is visible.

Across the city, damaged infrastructure has been repaired, major reconstruction projects are underway, and communities are beginning to experience the benefits of these investments. The scale of the disaster was comparable to a seismic event, but our collective response has demonstrated the resilience of the people of eThekwini and the determination of government to restore and improve what was lost.

Among the sectors hardest hit by the floods were water and sanitation. The destruction of pipelines, treatment facilities, pump stations and associated

infrastructure compounded existing pressures on the City's water network and significantly affected service delivery. Despite these setbacks, the Municipality has remained focused on implementing long-term solutions while simultaneously responding to immediate community needs.

2. UPGRADING AND BUILDING NEW WATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Ladies and Gentlemen, one of the most significant interventions has been the R1.2 billion Southern Aqueduct Upgrade Project, which will strengthen water security for more than 1.2 million residents in Umlazi, Folweni, Nsimbini, Chatsworth, Klaarwater, Northdene and Malvern.

Encouragingly, two of the six project packages have already been completed, and the Municipality remains on track to complete the remaining packages before the end of the year. Once completed, the project will provide a more reliable and resilient water supply network capable of meeting the demands of a growing city.

Working with Umgeni-uThukela Water, we are implementing the R11 billion Lower uMkhomazi Bulk Water Scheme, which will provide 70 megalitres of water to eThekwini. The project is expected to be completed in 2029 and will strengthen water security in areas south of Durban, including Isiphingo, Umgababa, KwaMakhutha, Thoyana, Mfume, Mnini and uMkhomazi.

Earlier this year, I inspected the project together with the leadership of Umgeni-uThukela Water. We were satisfied with its progress, as the project was approximately 50% complete at the time.

We are also making significant progress in the northern region. I am pleased to report that several areas have enjoyed an uninterrupted water supply for the past two to three years. This progress can be attributed in large part to the commissioning of the Northern Aqueduct in 2024, which has significantly stabilised water supply across many northern areas.

Currently, areas such as Umhlanga, Durban North, Sunningdale, Virginia, La Lucia, Glen Ashley and Avoca are receiving a full and reliable water supply. This demonstrates our continued efforts to ensure that all residents have access to a reliable and uninterrupted supply of water.

In 2024, we also commissioned the R56 million Ntuzuma Pump Station, which has improved water supply to communities including Lindelani, Ntuzuma, Machobeni, Tafuleni, Nhlungwane, Inanda and Amatikwe.

However, one of the main challenges we continue to face in these areas is the vandalism of water infrastructure, which disrupts supply to some communities. We urge residents to report incidents of vandalism promptly to the municipality

and the South African Police Service so that we can work together to eradicate this scourge and protect critical water infrastructure.

More recently, we launched a new R48 million water reservoir in KwaNqetho, which was upgraded from 1 megalitre to 6 megalitres to meet the growing demand for water in the area. The upgraded reservoir is now providing a reliable water supply to approximately 3,000 households in KwaNgcolosi and Nqetho.

In July this year, we commissioned a 3-megalitre water treatment works in Ogunjini, which also supplies Osindisweni Hospital. Municipal teams are currently repairing the reticulation network in the area to ensure that treated water reaches all households. In KwaXimba, we commissioned a 7-megalitre package plant in 2024, which is capable of supplying the entire KwaXimba community with clean water. We are exploring similar interventions, including package plants, in Ngonyameni, Zwelibomvu and eMaqadini.

2.1 BOREHOLES

To further augment water supply in rural areas, we have drilled 85 boreholes in various wards, particularly in rural areas including Mbumbulu, Mfume, Trenance Park in Phoenix, uMzinyathi, Mophela, KwaNyuswa, eMatikwe, eMatata, Amaoti, Bester, KwaXimba and Ogunjini

3. REDUCING NON-REVENUE WATER

The Municipality is making progress in reducing non-revenue water losses, tackling illegal connections, strengthening infrastructure security and intensifying maintenance programmes. You will recall that, in 2024, Council adopted the Water and Sanitation Turnaround Strategy as part of National Treasury's Trading Services Reforms, aimed at improving the performance and financial sustainability of water and sanitation services.

At the heart of the strategy was a commitment to reduce non-revenue water (water losses) by 5% annually, with the ultimate goal of achieving a non-revenue water level of 25% or below. Achieving this target requires the City to implement a range of decisive measures, including pipe replacement; responding to water leaks within 24 hours; replacing old household and industrial water meters; and installing bulk meters at water tanker filling points, reservoirs and standpipes.

We also committed to increasing the capacity of the Water and Sanitation Directorate by appointing a Senior Manager responsible for non-revenue water

(NRW), insourcing additional plumbers, artisans and engineers, and increasing the fleet available to plumbing teams.

We are pleased to report that, to date, the following interventions have been achieved:

- By the end of June, we had installed **150,000 flow restrictors** in high-pressure zones.
- Earlier this year, we appointed an **engineer at Senior Manager level** to lead the City's efforts to reduce non-revenue water.
- **R124 million** has been allocated for the recruitment of **70 of the 202 additional plumbers** required to improve the response time for the isolation of burst pipes to within four hours. This recruitment process commenced last month.
- **R54 million** has been allocated to automate reservoir outlets, thereby avoiding full night-time shutdowns. This project has commenced at reservoirs supplied by the Northern Aqueduct.
- A **specialised leak-repair team** has been established to address leaks in critical zones, with **R565 million** allocated for this work.
- The decentralisation of small plant and equipment to the regions commenced in August, with a budget of **R10 million**.

- **R102 million** has been allocated for proactive leak detection to augment planned maintenance.
- **R100 million** has been set aside for pipe replacement. The project has commenced in areas including **Phoenix, oThongathi and Verulam**. The long-term pipe replacement programme is expected to cost between **R350 million and R500 million**.
- **R30 million** has been allocated for educational campaigns across various media platforms to create greater awareness about the importance of saving water.
- The capacity of meter-reading teams has been increased since February this year. The results of this intervention are already evident, with the proportion of estimated water meters now reduced to **6%**.
- **R70 million** was allocated in February this year for the purchase of new water meters. This project aims to replace **40,000 water meters per annum** that are more than 15 years old.
- **R5 million** has been set aside for the installation of bulk meters in rural areas. This project is expected to be completed in December this year.
- Metering of informal settlements has commenced, with **R30 million** allocated to the programme.
- Metering of water tanker filling points has been completed at a cost of **R1 million**.
- Metering of previously unmetered properties has commenced, with **R30 million** allocated to the programme.

These interventions represent a significant investment in strengthening the City’s water and sanitation infrastructure, improving operational efficiency and addressing the causes of water losses.

We are confident that, collectively and over time, these measures will make a significant contribution towards reducing non-revenue water, improving the reliability and efficiency of our water and sanitation services,

In addition, eThekwini has successfully insourced its water tanker service, investing approximately R345 million in building an internal fleet that currently consists of 318 tankers, with further expansion planned before year-end. This has strengthened the City's ability to respond to water outages and ensure that vulnerable communities continue to receive access to clean drinking water while longer-term infrastructure solutions are implemented.

While challenges remain, particularly those linked to the legacy of flood damage and rapid urban growth, this administration has demonstrated its willingness to confront these realities head-on. Rather than shrinking from adversity, the leadership of the City, working together with all spheres of

government and municipal employees, has continued to rebuild, invest and lay the foundations for a stronger, more resilient eThekwini.

The work is not yet complete, but the progress made over this term provides confidence that the City is moving steadily towards a more secure and sustainable future.

4. REHABILITATING CRITICAL WASTEWATER AND SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE

Council approved three priority interventions to address ageing and underperforming wastewater infrastructure, to be implemented by uMngeni-uThukela Water (UUW) under the City's existing agreement with the water utility. The estimated cost of R791 million includes professional fees, procurement, project management, escalation and contingencies. The interventions are:

- The rehabilitation of the Mahatma Gandhi Pump Station, estimated at R691 million;
- Emergency works at the Central Wastewater Treatment Works, estimated at R90 million, including the replacement of critical sewer outfall sections and the stabilisation and protection of the works' embankment and electrical substation; and

- The resuscitation of the Old Point Road Pump Station as a potential screening, attenuation, odour-control and flow-regulation facility, subject to the outcome of feasibility and condition assessments.

These projects were prioritised because failure of this infrastructure could result in sewage overflows, environmental pollution, damage to critical infrastructure, interruptions to services and risks to public health. Partnering with UUW allows the City to use the utility's technical and implementation capacity to accelerate delivery.

The City will reimburse UUW through a payment plan over approximately two to three years, subject to final project costs, affordability and compliance with the Municipal Finance Management Act. A joint eThekwini Municipality–UUW Project Steering Committee will oversee implementation and report regularly to Council structures on progress, expenditure and risks.

Council further approved the reprioritisation of R157 million within the 2026/27 budget to complete storm-damaged sewer repair projects that are already under way. The projects include sewer repairs in Clermont, Savannah Park, Bridge City, Montclair, La Mercy, Verulam, Mount Moriah and Ottawa, among others.

5. INSOURCING OF SECURITY SERVICES

As part of our ongoing efforts to increase the internal capacity of the municipality, the Council approved the creation and filling of 85 permanent Asset Protection Officer posts within the Security Management Services Directorate, with effect from 1 December 2026.

The R38.66 million operating cost will be funded by redirecting part of the existing budget for outsourced security, so no additional operating funding is required. The officers will protect water, electricity and other municipal infrastructure, facilities and land against vandalism, theft and unlawful occupation. This is part of a phased approach to building in-house security capacity and reducing reliance on outsourced services.

6. ATTRACTING INVESTMENT AND GROWING THE ECONOMY

Council approved property rates rebates, in terms of the City's Economic Development Incentive Policy, for five new developments with a combined investment value of approximately R1.97 billion. The policy reduces the cost of developing in eThekwini in order to attract new investment, create jobs and, over time, grow the City's rates base.

Each rebate applies for a fixed period of three years and will be governed by a Memorandum of Agreement with the investor.

Council also approved the establishment of the eThekwini Inner-City Development Company, a municipal entity majority-owned by the City. Developed with the support of the Government Technical Advisory Centre in National Treasury, the company will lead precinct-based regeneration of the inner city, act as the City's development agent for inner-city land and buildings, attract public and private investment, and hold service departments accountable for delivery in the inner city through service level agreements.

Council approved a R30 million establishment grant in the 2027/28 financial year and a base operating grant of R25 million a year from 2028/29 to 2031/32. The company is expected to begin operating within the 2027/28 financial year, with early attention to problem buildings. No core municipal services will be transferred to the company, and its establishment has no impact on existing municipal staff.

Council approved a further and final five-year deferment of rates on properties held by the Durban Point Development Company, in which the Municipality

holds a 50% shareholding, to enable it to advance Phase 1 of the Point Waterfront development. The company has presented plans for a mixed-use retail and residential development and a hotel, subject to securing funding. The deferment carries strict conditions: all deferred rates and interest remain owing to the City, become payable when any property is transferred or when the period ends, and no further deferment will be considered.

7. HUMAN SETTLEMENTS-ADVANCED DENSIFICATION MODEL

Ladies and Gentlemen, to address the challenge of the shortage of land for new housing developments, the council approved funding to advance a Vertical Densification Model for future human settlements, under which the City will provide affordable housing in multi-storey buildings of between three and ten storeys, through sectional title or rental arrangements.

The model makes better use of scarce land and brings housing closer to economic opportunities. It builds on the eMapheleni Phase 1 project in KwaDabeka, which delivered 442 units on approximately 1.5 hectares.

Council allocated R10 million over the 2027/28 and 2028/29 financial years for detailed planning and land-use approvals at three pilot sites: Dakota Beach in Isipingo, Kloof, and Cornubia Phase 1B.

Council approved the inclusion of R121.06 million in unspent but fully committed Human Settlements funding from 2025/26 in the 2026/27 capital budget. This allows work to continue without interruption on infrastructure for Cornubia Phase 2 (R58 million), the reconstruction and rehabilitation of approximately 293 storm-damaged houses (R31.5 million), and storm disaster interventions including hostel refurbishment and temporary emergency accommodation (R31.7 million).

Council also amended the Land Use Scheme to give effect to zoning for individual sites in Cornubia Phases 2A and 2B.

An amount of R22.15 million was approved by council, funded through the Human Settlements Development Grant, to continue temporary emergency accommodation from 1 August to 31 December 2026 for people displaced by the April 2022 floods. Eight temporary facilities have already been closed, and the remaining facilities are scheduled for phased closure between now and

mid-2027 as families are relocated to permanent housing, mainly at Cornubia and Montclair Lodge.

8. IMPROVING ELECTRICITY NETWORK RELIABILITY

Council approved the reallocation of R57.47 million within the Electricity and Energy capital budget to 18 projects requiring additional funding, including substation and network projects delayed by commissioning challenges in the previous financial year.

A further R47.3 million in savings has been redirected to urgent network projects, including an additional R20 million for medium-voltage cable replacement and the ring-fencing of customer payments for new supply connections.

These projects are intended to reduce the frequency and duration of outages and to replace vandalised, damaged and unsafe equipment. Both reallocations are made within the existing approved budget.

9. EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Council accepted a grant of approximately R255 million (EUR 13.5 million) funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and disbursed by KfW Development Bank, for a five-year Early Childhood Development programme.

Most of the investment will upgrade existing early childhood development centres in informal settlements, townships and rural areas, with a limited number of new facilities. The programme also covers training for practitioners and caregivers, health support for children up to six years and pregnant mothers, and equipment. The City will contribute approximately R37 million, mainly through land, buildings, training and staff support. Site selection criteria are being finalised.

Council further approved:

- R28.77 million to complete recreation and community facility projects already under implementation, including the Mobeni Crematoria, the Umlazi CC Hall and the Newlands Swimming Pool;

10. CLOSING

These resolutions were adopted at the final Council meeting of this term. The administration, led by the City Manager as Accounting Officer, is responsible for implementing them. The delivery of services and the implementation of Council resolutions will continue without interruption ahead of the Local Government Elections.

I thank you.

ENDS