ADDRESS BY ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR, CLLE CYRIL XABA AT THE FRAUD PREVENTION SEMINAR, 20 NOVEMBER 2025

- Programme Director
- EThekwini Municipality Executive Director: Mr Sipho Cele
- Institute of Commercial Forensic Practitioners CEO: Mr Chris De Beer
- EThekwini Municipality Director for CIID: Mr Jimmy Ngcobo and all senior officials present
- DPP: KZN NPA, Adv Bulelwa Vimbani
- Partner: Forensic Services PwC, Adv Pontsho Nyathi
- Independent Consultant: Enterprise Governance, Risk, Ethics & Assurance, Mr Phillip Ntsimane
- Chairperson: Financial Misconduct Disciplinary Board, Adv Makhosini Nkosi
- Director: Forensics at KZN COGTA, Ms Sheetal Govender
- Distinguished guests, partners, participants and delegates
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning

It is an honour to join you at this important Fraud Prevention Seminar, which aligns with our National Anti-Corruption Strategy and strengthens our collective response to the pervasive challenge of fraud and corruption in our country.

It is no coincidence that this gathering takes place in a venue named after Inkosi Albert Luthuli, a global symbol of integrity and ethical leadership. Through his words and actions, he championed selfless service, honesty, and accountability. We must continue to draw inspiration from his legacy as we serve the people of eThekwini with dedication and integrity.

Programme Director, corruption remains a serious challenge in South Africa. According to the 2024 Corruption Perception Index, the country ranks 82nd out of 180 countries. The 2023 Afrobarometer survey indicates that more than 82% of citizens believe corruption has worsened.

Furthermore, an estimated R27 billion is lost annually, money that could fund nutritional support programmes for food-insecure households. This reaffirms a point we have always emphasised that fraud and corruption is

equivalent to stealing from the poor. It is for this reason that we are saying when someone has been caught stealing from the public purse, that person should not only arrested, but we must also recoup the resources of the state.

I am encouraged to see such a diverse gathering of professionals which include investigators, auditors, legal experts, public servants, and sector leaders united by a common purpose of advancing integrity, accountability, and ethical governance within our institutions.

This seminar comes at a crucial time when municipalities across the country face growing demands for transparency and clean administration. Fraud, corruption, and maladministration weaken service delivery, erode public trust, and undermine our developmental mandate. Platforms like today's engagement strengthen our resolve and sharpen our collective strategies to confront these threats.

As the eThekwini Municipality, we emphasise that fraud prevention is not just a compliance obligation, it is a governance imperative that directly

affects service delivery. I want to commend the City Integrity and Investigations Directorate, under the leadership of Mr Jimmy Ngcobo, for their commitment to strengthening internal controls, promoting ethical conduct, and ensuring accountability. Your work is central to safeguarding the credibility and resilience of our City.

Ladies and gentlemen, ethical leadership remains one of our most effective tools in combating fraud and corruption. When leaders embody integrity, transparency, and accountability, these values become embedded throughout the institution. We must therefore continue to invest in leadership development, strengthen consequence management, and ensure that those entrusted with public resources lead by example. A culture of ethics must be lived and demonstrated daily.

Another key pillar of fraud prevention is community trust and participation**.** When residents feel heard and respected, they become active partners in safeguarding public resources. Whistleblowing platforms and public reporting mechanisms must be accessible, protected, and responsive. By empowering communities to speak out without fear, we reinforce the social compact between the municipality and the people we serve.

Ladies and Gentlemen, today's programme is rich and thought-provoking. It tackles critical issues such as professionalisation in the public sector, forensic investigation standards, malicious whistleblowing, transnational organised crime, and the safety of practitioners. These topics remind us that fraud prevention is multidimensional as it spans policy, practice, people, and partnerships.

But beyond technical discussions, today is an opportunity to reaffirm a simple truth that Integrity is everybody's responsibility. Every official, every leader, and every institution represented here plays a key role in building a culture where misconduct is confronted.

As we work toward a more ethical and transparent public sector, we must strengthen collaboration between government, civil society, law enforcement agencies, and professional bodies such as the Institute of Commercial Forensic Practitioners. We must embrace innovation, invest in skills development, and protect those who stand up for truth and justice. Above all, we must ensure that the people of eThekwini and South Africa

can trust that public resources are managed responsibly and in their best interest.

Looking ahead, our success in combating fraud will depend on how boldly we adopt technology, innovation, and preventative systems. Artificial intelligence, data analytics, and digital monitoring tools offer new opportunities to detect irregularities early, enhance transparency, and improve decision-making. But technology alone is not enough. We must also cultivate a new generation of ethical public servants for whom integrity is a core value.

We must shift from reactive governance to predictive and resilient institutions, capable of anticipating risks before they materialise. This requires harnessing data, behavioural insights, and risk modelling to forecast vulnerabilities across departments and supply chains.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all speakers and contributors for making this seminar possible. Your insights will guide the work ahead and help shape a more accountable future for us all.

I wish you productive discussions, strengthened partnerships, and renewed commitment as we continue the fight against fraud and corruption.

Thank you.