WELCOME REMARKS BY ETHWKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR CLLR CYRIL XABA AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE G20 4TH CULTURE WORKING GROUP AND MINISTERIAL MEETINGS, 27 OCTOBER 2025

- Programme Director: Ms Zimasa Velaphi
- Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture: Hon. Gayton McKenzie
- Honourable Ministers from G20 member states and partner countries
- KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Sport, Arts and Culture: Mr Mntomuhle Khawula
- Department of Sport, Arts and Culture Director-General: Dr Cynthia Khumalo,
- G20 Culture Working Group Chairperson: Ms Lisa Combrinck, South Africa's G20 CWG Chairperson
- Troika Member (Brazil): Mr Bruno H. R. Melo, Head of International Relations, Ministry of Culture, Brazil
- African Union Head of Culture Division: Ms Angela Martins
- Knowledge Partner (UNESCO): Ms Emmanuelle Roberts

- Distinguished Heads of Delegation

- Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- Esteemed representatives of the United Nations, UNESCO and the African Union
- Provincial and local government leaders
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

On behalf of the people of eThekwini, it is a profound honour and privilege for me to extend to you all a very warm welcome to Durban a city of rich heritage, vibrant traditions, and boundless hospitality.

We are delighted to host this prestigious G20 4th Culture Working Group and Ministerial Meeting here in KwaZulu-Natal, under the South African Presidency of the G20, guided by the inspiring theme: ***"Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainable Development."***

Honourable guests, we meet at a critical moment in the history of our shared world, a world navigating complex challenges: social inequality,

the digital divide, the climate crisis, and the lingering effects of global economic disruptions.

In such times, it is culture, often underestimated, that offers a pathway to unity and resilience. Culture has the power to bridge divides, to heal historical wounds, and to remind us of our shared humanity.

The G20 Culture Working Group, under South Africa's Presidency, rightly places culture at the centre of global dialogue for sustainable development. This is not merely symbolic; it is strategic. For too long, the narrative of development has focused primarily on economics and infrastructure, often sidelining the cultural dimension that shapes how societies truly thrive. Yet we know, especially in the Global South, that culture is not only about identity; it is also about livelihoods. It sustains creative industries, drives tourism, empowers women and youth, and fuels innovation.

In eThekwini alone, the creative and cultural economy employs thousands of artists, performers, filmmakers, designers, and digital creators. Each of them carries the torch of our collective identity while contributing to the

local and national economy. Thus, when we invest in culture, we are not merely funding festivals or museums; we are investing in people, in their stories, their dreams, and their potential to shape a more equitable world.

As South Africa takes up the G20 Presidency under the banner of *“Solidarity, Equality, and Sustainable Development,”* this gathering becomes a vital platform for amplifying Africa’s voice on the global stage.

You will agree with me that global conversations have been dominated by the perspectives of the North. Today, through this G20 Culture Working Group, we are shifting that balance, not by exclusion, but by inclusion.

We are saying that the wisdom of the Global South, our ways of knowing, creating, and being, have an equal place in shaping the world’s cultural agenda. We are affirming that sustainable development cannot be achieved without social and cultural justice.

Through this Working Group, we are weaving a tapestry of global cooperation, where every thread contributes to a richer, more humane picture of the world we wish to build.

In doing so, we honour the aspirations of the African Union's Agenda 2063 — *"The Africa We Want"* — and align them with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly Goal 11.4, which calls for the strengthening of efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage.

Distinguished guests, as the host city, Durban is not new to international cooperation. We are proud of our history as a city of global engagement, having hosted landmark gatherings such as the COP17 Climate Change Conference, the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, and the International AIDS Conference.

To host the G20 Culture Working Group here is therefore fitting because Durban and KwaZulu-Natal embody the very essence of what this meeting seeks to promote: intercultural dialogue, inclusivity, and sustainable creativity.

Over the next three days, as you deliberate on the role of culture in global development, I invite you also to experience culture, to taste, to listen, to

dance, and to connect. Take a walk along our beachfront promenade, visit tourism products to see what Durban has to offer.

As we engage in these G20 deliberations, let us remember that global change begins with local action. Every policy we discuss here must eventually impact the lives of ordinary people, such as the dancer in Umlazi, the sculptor in Inanda, the filmmaker in Inyanga, or the storyteller in Nongoma.

May the spirit of *ubuntu* guide our discussions, reminding us that our destinies are intertwined, and that together, we can build a world that celebrates both our differences and our shared humanity.

Thank you, and once again, welcome to Durban.