ADDRESS BY ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR, CLLR CYRIL XABA AT THE WORLD HOMELESS DAY AND LAUNCH OF THE MULTI-STAKEHOLDER TECHNICAL TASK TEAM ON HOMELESSNESS, 29 October 2025

- Programme Director
- Deputy Mayor: Cllr Zandile Myeni
- Councillors present
- District Commissioner of the South African Police Service: Major General Kheswa
- Mr Mbongeni Magagula from Home Affairs
- Metro Police Commissioner: Mr Sibonelo Mchunu
- Head of Mile: Prof Mpilo Ngubane
- Director Social and Community Development: Mr Vincent Cebekhulu
- Head: Safer Cities: Mr Martin Xaba
- Representatives from national and provincial departments Civil society, NGOs, academia, business sector partners, and community representatives
- Members from the media
- Distinguished guests

- Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon.

Today, we gather on World Homeless Day, not merely to commemorate but to confront one of the most pressing human development challenges of our time, the growing phenomenon of homelessness in our city and across the country.

Let us be clear, this is not just an urban management issue. It is about the restoration of human dignity. Every individual living on our streets represents a story of displacement, vulnerability, and survival. As a municipality committed to social justice and inclusivity, eThekwini cannot look away.

We want to commend the work that is being done by our officials in collaboration with the civil society for continuing to provide much-needed support to the homeless people. Your act of kindness, no matter how small it is, restores dignity to this vulnerable group. It is in these moments of shared humanity that we discover the true character of a caring city: one

that measures its success not by its skyline, but by how it uplifts its most vulnerable.

Ladies and gentlemen, we want to indicate that homelessness is a global phenomenon and it is not only confined to the developing world. According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), over 1.6 billion people globally live in inadequate housing, with more than 150 million experiencing absolute homelessness.

These numbers are not just statistics; they are a call to action. In line with the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly Sustainable Development Goal 11, all cities are urged to ensure that urban spaces are *inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable*. This means no one should be left behind, not even those without an address.

Compounding the situation is the challenge of rapid urbanisation, poverty, and displacement caused by conflict and climate change. According to the African Union's Agenda 2063, inclusive growth and sustainable development require that we address the vulnerabilities of people living without shelter or social protection. It is in this context that we are now

implementing innovative and integrated approaches that combine housing support, skills development, and psychosocial care. These efforts remind us that homelessness is a collective responsibility and requires coordination across all sectors.

The launch of this Multi-Stakeholder Technical Task Team today exemplifies the spirit of collaboration that we are embracing as stakeholders to confront the challenge of homelessness.

Ladies and Gentlemen, a study conducted by eThekwini Municipality in 2022 indicates that approximately 16 000 people live on the streets of Durban. Clearly, this challenge cannot be resolved by government alone. It demands coordination among national, provincial and local authorities, and it must include the vital contributions of civil society, the private sector, faith communities, academia, and the homeless themselves.

That is why today we officially launch the eThekwini Multi-Stakeholder Technical Task Team on Homelessness, a platform designed to bring together every sector represented here to co-create, coordinate, and sustain practical interventions.

This Task Team's Terms of Reference outline a clear mandate:

- To coordinate and integrate services among stakeholders.
- To prevent and mitigate homelessness through sustainable interventions.
- To facilitate rehabilitation, reintegration, and socio-economic inclusion.
- To align our local initiatives with national and provincial policy frameworks.
- And to monitor and evaluate our collective impact over time.

I want to thank all our partners who are working with us to resolve the homelessness challenge in the city.

Through the work of this Task Team, we will strengthen data collection, improve shelter management, promote health and rehabilitation, and expand skills development and employment pathways for homeless people.

Ladies and Gentlemen, this morning I undertook an oversight visit with the Deputy Mayor to Sakhithemba Homeless Shelter that we are constructing in Illovo, south of Durban to assess the progress. This is going to be a partnership with non-government actors who are already operating in the space.

We want to indicate that this will be a unique shelter because the homeless people who will be accommodated will receive rehabilitation treatment, psychological services and development programmes that will lead them to reunite with their families.

The focus is to put them on the pathway out of homelessness. Secondly, we will bring people to the centre who would have been profiled and in need of help. This is also where this multi-stakeholder forum we are launching today will be instrumental.

On behalf of the eThekwini Municipality, I extend my deepest gratitude to everyone here for your commitment to restoring dignity, hope, and belonging to our most vulnerable citizens. Let us make eThekwini a city where every person counts, every voice matters, and every life is valued.

Thank you.