WELCOMING REMARKS BY ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR CLLR CYRIL XABA, AT THE SAWLA'S ANNUAL VICTORIA MXENGE MEMORIAL LECTURE, 26 SEPTEMBER 2025

- Programme director
- Minister of Justice and Constitutional Development: Ms Mmamoloko Kubayi
- President of the South African Women Lawyers Association: Ms Nomaswazi Shabangu-Mndawe
- Chairperson of the Legal Sector Code Charter Council: Ms Christina Qunta
- Distinguished guests
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good evening. Sanibona.

It is a great honour and distinct privilege to join you this evening on this momentous occasion where we remember one of our nation's struggle stalwarts, umama uVictoria Nonyamezelo Mxenge.

On behalf of the people of eThekwini, we wish to extend the warmest welcome to everyone in attendance. It is significant this memorial lecture takes place during Heritage Month when we come together as a nation to celebrate our cultural heritage. But more importantly, it is also a time to reflect on the path we have traversed from an oppressive and racist past to a democratic dispensation.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is through sacrifices by heroes and heroines like umama Mxenge that we enjoy the freedom we have today. Like many others that we lost, umama Mxenge will always be a symbol of resistance against the brutal apartheid regime. In her honour, we must strive to build an equal, just, and prosperous society.

Aptly themed: “Igniting the Flame of the Soroptimist Torch and Run Your Race,” this gathering makes a clarion call to all to strengthen collaboration in the legal profession by creating a conducive environment for women in this field to thrive. Therefore, we must ensure that we empower legal eagles of the future by removing all the barriers to entry so that young women who want to emulate umama Mxenge are able to realise their potential.

Hence, we commend the South African Women Lawyers Association (SAWLA) for advocating for women empowerment and advancement in the legal field. We have no doubt that umama Mxenge would be proud of the work you do as an organisation.

As a true patriot who was committed to serve her people, it is not a coincident that umama Mxenge started as a nurse before she acquired legal qualifications. This transition from the health sector to the legal fraternity reflects her unwavering commitment to contribute positively to improving the lives of her people.

It is for this reason that in her, this democratic government has named some of the crucial public amenities after her. For instance, in Umlazi, we the Victoria Mxenge Indoor Sport Centre which promotes an active and healthy lifestyle among the youth. Recently, the King Edward Hospital where uMama Mxenge was trained as a nurse was officially renamed Victoria Mxenge Hospital. Thanks to the visionary leadership of the MEC for Health, Ms Nomagugu Simelane.

Programme director, leaders of the calibre of umama Mxenge remind us that we should use our positions to serve the most vulnerable in our society. Where we lead, we must do so with honesty, transparency, and integrity – setting a positive example for others while fostering a culture of accountability.

As we celebrate this giant human rights activist, we must remember her for her fearless spirit and strong dedication to equality, human rights, and restoring dignity of the oppressed. We would like to see these values being emulated by current leaders of the society whether you are in government, business, or civil society. It is only when we have ethical leaders that we can restore the public trust.

Lastly, we are confident that tonight's lecture will serve as a powerful source of inspiration for all of us as we strive to build a united and prosperous society. Let us ensure that the spirit of umama Mxenge continues to inspire us and lives for generations to come.

Once again, let me welcome you all and wish you a fruitful Annual general Meeting tomorrow.

I thank you.