MAYOR XABA WELCOMING REMARKS DURING THE VISIT BY UK HIGH COMMISSIONER TO SOUTH AFRICA, 27 MAY 2027

- UK High Commissioner: Your Excellency Antony Phillipson
- Your entire delegation
- Senior management of eThekwini Municipality
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good morning

Thank you for taking the time, despite your busy schedule, to visit our beautiful city of Durban. Allow me to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to you and your delegation.

The United Kingdom remains one of South Africa's most significant foreign investors and trading partners, with deep connections across sectors such as mining, manufacturing, and financial services. It is important that this strong partnership also cascades to the provincial and city levels.

I am pleased that since assuming your post in 2021, you have worked diligently to strengthen relations between South Africa and the UK. You have also ensured that our city benefits from these growing relations. My team will elaborate further on the progress we have made in some of the programmes that your office has been instrumental in championing within the city.

I must say that, following the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, the city of Durban has steadily recovered. In fact, I am pleased to confirm that our tourism sector is gradually returning to pre-pandemic levels. This is very encouraging. Last year alone, the city welcomed approximately 186,000 international visitors, with the UK remaining one of our important source markets.

In the area of transport and logistics, we are implementing various initiatives aimed at improving the efficiency of the Port of Durban. We are also partnering with private developers to build a dry port, which will assist in decongesting the harbour and enhancing trade operations.

With regards to investment, we currently have an investment pipeline of R217 billion in catalytic projects at various stages of implementation. Of this amount, R50 billion worth of investments was unveiled last year alone.

This demonstrates growing business confidence in our city. This can be attributed to the investments we are making to upgrade our infrastructure, particularly electricity, roads, water and sanitation. We are also investing in safety initiatives, including smart policing technologies, to protect our residents, assets, and investments within the city.

Your excellency, I have been looking forward to this engagement, particularly because of the vast knowledge and experience you have accumulated through your various government portfolios and diplomatic assignments in different countries.

With these remarks, allow me once again to warmly welcome you all. I look forward to fruitful and productive discussions.