**REMARKS BY ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR, CLLR CYRIL XABA AT THE DURBAN FILM-MART, 18 JULY 2025**

- Programme Director
- eThekwini Municipality Chairperson for the Economic Development and Planning Committee: Cllr Thembo Ntuli
- Filmmakers from across Africa and around the world,
- Distinguished Guests
- Industry leaders and creatives

Good evening

It is a great honour and privilege to welcome you all to **Durban** – our warm, vibrant, and culturally rich city. We are delighted to host you again for this year's **Durban FilmMart**, Africa's premier film finance and co-production market.

This year's FilmMart opens not only on a profoundly significant day – Nelson Mandela International Day – but also at this venue, bearing the name of the global icon – Nelson Mandela Terminal. As we gather here

tonight, we are reminded of the enduring power of stories – the power to unite, heal, and transform.

The 2025 Mandela Day theme, *“It’s still in our hands to combat poverty and inequity,”* is a powerful call to action. It reminds us that the fight for justice, equality, and dignity is not over – and that each of us, through our work and platforms, holds the power to make a meaningful impact.

Nowhere is this truer than in film. You will agree with me that film has the unique ability to shine a light on untold stories, challenge injustice, and reimagine what a more equitable world can look like. As filmmakers, producers, writers, and creatives, you are not just storytellers – you are the changemakers.

Durban is proud to stand with you in that mission. Our city is deeply rooted in a heritage shaped by struggle, resilience, and the richness of diversity. From the powerful legacy of Nelson Mandela, to the vibrant spirit of our people, Durban offers not only world-class film locations, but also stories that deserve to be seen and heard globally.

As a city, we are committed to nurturing talent, removing barriers, and creating an enabling environment for film production and industry growth. The Durban Film Office is your partner – ready to support your vision and champion innovation. It is in this context that we are saying Durban is open for film business – and we are ready to grow with you.

Over the next few days, as you engage in panels, pitch sessions, and collaborations, I encourage you to do so with the Madiba spirit in mind – with courage, compassion, and conviction. Let your stories reflect the world we hope to build – a world of equality, inclusion, and justice.

We once again congratulate the organisers of the Durban FilmMart for raising the voices of African storytellers, and ensuring the world is presented with authentic African narratives. The creative industry is one of the key sectors that must drive economic growth in our continent, and the eThekwini Municipality is proud to play a meaningful role in this initiative.

On behalf of the people of eThekwini Municipality, I welcome you all to our beautiful city. May your time in Durban be filled with inspiration, creativity, and meaningful connections.

Welcome to the Durban FilmMart.

I thank you