EXCO REMARKS BY ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR, CLLR CYRIL XABA, 28 JANUARY 2025

- Deputy Mayor
- Speaker of Council
- Whip of Council
- Chairpersons of Committees
- City Manager and Senior Management
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good Afternoon;

It gives me pleasure to welcome you all to our first physical Executive Committee meeting in 2025.

Compliments of the new season to everyone. I know we have passed that, but it is good to see you all in good health, reenergised and ready to take new challenges head. I recommit to working with all of you in our search for solutions to our challenges.

From the onset, I wish to congratulate the Class of 2024 who wrote the National Senior Certificate examinations for their success. We thank them for their remarkable achievements. It gives us all hope for the future, because it is only when we achieve success in education that we have a chance to build a sustainable economy that creates jobs.

On Friday, 24 January we hosted the eThekwini Mayoral Matric Excellence Awards in recognition of these learners, their educators and parents who prepared them.

Ladies and gentlemen, we also come from a successful festive season where visitors were able to enjoy various tourism products the city has to offer. Let me register my appreciation to the Chairperson of ECOD, who together with the then Acting DCM Phewa, led me to the launch of what was going to be a spectacular festive season. This was followed by a meticulously crafted Festive Season Management Plan that assured our visitors that the City was open for business and that we remain a premier destination for leisure, entertainment, conferencing and sporting.

Through this plan, we delivered a safe a memorable festive season. Our Metro Police, search and rescue team, EThekwini Water and Sanitation and the Parks, Recreation and Culture units formed the core of this plan.

I wish to single out the Cleansing and Solid Waste Unit and the Metro Police for their visibility during this period. Our major attraction, the bathing beaches remained open and safe for swimming throughout the season. In particular, I want to thank the lifeguards, pool attendants and childminders who were present throughout the festive season.

Furthermore, I wish to thank the Deputy Mayor and other EXCO members for participating in the Homeless Outreach Campaign last week. This initiative is important for the city because it seeks to give a second chance to the people who find themselves living on the street.

On the day, a wide range of services were available including application for the Identity Document (IDs) and applying for social grants on the spot. Different Non-Government Organizations (NGOs) were also present to offer health screening services.

Ladies and gentlemen, we remain committed to transform eThekwini to become the most caring and liveable city. Last week, MEC for Public Works and Infrastructure Martin Meyer and his team met with our team to discuss details on how we are going to streamline our joint programme to eradicate bad buildings in the city.

These buildings are a stumbling block for investment. They stand opposite to government's effort to attract investment into the City. In the next few weeks, I will be approaching this leadership with some proposal.

Over the next two days, the issue of underutilised, unused and abandoned buildings that sometimes give rise to bad buildings will feature prominently at The "Build KZN Better Conference on Property Management." This conference brings together key industry role players including government, professionals, and investors to discuss innovative ways to revive inner city properties and transform our city.

We seek to use our Land Release Strategy to enhance the economic profile of the City and enhance its revenue collection. Our interest is in utilising our assets in a manner that preserves them for our future generation.

We thank the MEC for Public Works and Infrastructure, Mr. Martin Meyer, and the provincial leadership for partnering with us in this drive to make state assets work for the public.

This meeting is a culmination of hard work between the city, the provincial Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, and all relevant stakeholders to develop impactful strategies which seek to change the face of our city.

Therefore, we are looking forward to a frank and robust engagement which we hope will bring new ideas that will result in a more coordinated and economically sustainable approach to managing government property.

Colleagues, the city continues to grapple with water challenges, and we are aware that the communities in the south and some parts of the central to the north are experiencing intermittent water supply and some have gone without water supply for an extended period.

I announced in my inaugural speech that I find it utterly unacceptable that our residents should be made to endure a situation of non-availability of water for an extended period. In the last three months, we were inundated with calls from irate residents complain about water challenges, that on the Christmas Day the Minister of Water and Sanitation, uMngeni-uThukela Water Board Members and I convened an urgent meeting.

In that meeting, we agreed that our water system has recovered somewhat to warrant the review of the water curtailment. The water curtailment was lifted with immediate effect. But we still have water supply challenges, now worse than before.

I am convening an urgent EXCO meeting this Friday to discuss this situation and our focus will be on the following:

- We need a list of the areas that had water supply interruption in the last three months,
- The days the communities were without water,
- Investigation and findings in each case,

• Action taken,
• Recommendations.

Linked to this but not directly, we will review the way our call centres operate, to make them more effective and help the City to improve its turnaround time and become more efficient and responsive.

I am in discussion with the MEC for Transport Siboniso Duma and we agreed that in the next few weeks we will announce a campaign to bury the potholes within the City. I am alerting our team in the Roads Unit to stand ready. I am saying this as I welcome the new Head of that Unit, Ms Gugu Ngubane.

With these remarks, I would like to welcome you all and thank the Office of the Auditor-General for agreeing to present to us today.

I Thank You!