WELCOMING REMARKS BY ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR, CLLR MXOLISI KAUNDA AT THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF 2020 KZN MATRIC RESULTS, 23 FEBRUARY, DURBAN

- Programme Director
- KwaZulu-Natal Premier: Mr Sihle Zikala
- KZN MEC for Education: Mr. Kwazi Mshengu
- Head of Department of Education: Dr. Enock Nzama
- Teacher Unions
- Teachers
- Learners
- Members of the Media
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Sanibonani. Good morning.

It is a distinct honour and privilege for me to welcome you to the eThekwini Municipality on this joyous occasion. We are deeply humbled for the opportunity to join you today as we celebrate the achievements of the class of 2020.

We would like to congratulate the class of 2020 because, unlike in the past, they were faced with multitudes of challenges which threatened to halt schooling and interfered with the curriculum as the country grappled with the advent of COVID-19.

Therefore, as we gather today, we celebrate triumph over adversity and draw inspiration from you for your resilience in the face of this deadly pandemic. We also want to encourage those that did not get desirable results not to throw in the towel, but to seek ways to improve their marks through the Department of Education programmes.

Again, you have shown us that hard work pays, and we would like to call on all stakeholders to join us in our efforts to nurture our youth and help produce an educated population, adequately equipped for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Our gratitude goes out to the teachers, learners and parents for playing their important roles respectively – teachers being at school to teach and learners being in class on time to learn.

The matriculants of KwaZulu-Natal made us proud with their performance under trying circumstances where the virus was claiming lives of many of our family members. However, amid all the doom and gloom you all persisted, and, in the end, you have achieved your goals.

Ladies and gentlemen, the ANC government is serious about education hence it remains an Apex priority. Education is the only hope we have for the complete liberation of our people. The steady increase of the matric pass rate over the years, both at provincial and national levels, continues to give us hope for the future.

For this reason, we must continue to improve access to education and ensure that no child is left behind, particularly those who were previously marginalised.

We are also encouraged that during this uncertain period of the pandemic, government has intensified its efforts to provide social protection for vulnerable individuals in our communities. We have no doubt that it is because of such interventions that the country has been able to create an

enabling environment for young people to thrive and complete the curriculum.

As the country celebrates 27 years of democracy, we must reimagine post COVID-19 South Africa and collectively work together to build a better life for all.

While this pandemic has brought unimaginable challenges, we must come out of this in a better position to create opportunities for a more equal and just society in which all citizens are able to participate meaningfully in the economy of this country.

Programme Director, eThekwini Municipality recognises the importance of investing in youth and ensuring that there is access to education. For the class of 2020, we have already allocated funding for financially needy students through our Student Relief Fund. This intervention assists students who have performed well with registration fees or help those who are already at tertiary level to settle their outstanding fees.

We have also identified areas where there are scarce skills in the country and have stepped in by providing a bursary scheme to fund students in the fields of Engineering, Architecture, Quantity Surveying and Applied Chemistry.

Finally, we want to assure you all that eThekwini Municipality will continue to partner with the provincial government and all relevant stakeholders in the education sector to build a strong and educated nation.

I thank you.