MEDIA STATEMENT BY ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR, MXOLISI KAUNDA ON THE SHEMBE CHURCH FOR 2023 PILGRIMAGE, 3 JANUARY 2023

- Programme Director
- Ilembe Municipality District Mayor: Cllr Thobani Shandu
- Ndwedwe Local Municipality Mayor: Cllr Mzamo Mfeka
- Chairperson of Human Settlements and Infrastructure: Cllr Thembo Ntuli
- Chairperson of Governance and Human Resources in eThekwini Municipality: Cllr Nkosenhle Madlala
- City Manager and Senior Management
- Members of the Media

Good morning and compliments of the new year.

We are please to meet with you on this first media engagement of the year and we trust that you had a smooth transition into the new year.

As the leadership of the three Municipalities, namely eThekwini, Ilembe and Ndwedwe, we have convened this media briefing to outline the plans we have put in place to support the Nazareth Baptist Church during their pilgrimage which starts this week.

As you all know, the pilgrims depart from eThekwini Municipality and hold their gathering in Khenani and Nhlangakazi holy mountains where they are hosted by Ndwedwe Local Municipality and Ilembe District Municipality.

Let me take this opportunity to thank my counterparts and officials from the three municipality for working together to provide a comprehensive support to all the Nazareth Baptist Church denominations.

The support we are providing this year include the following:

- 8 Waste Skips which will be placed along the route to the holy mountains
- 4 Ambulances
- 20 000 Waste Plastic Bags

- 5 Water tankers
- 200 mobile ablutions which are hired at a cost of R19 000 per day
- Mobile Clinic
- 100 Waste Collectors
- Deployment of Metro Police for traffic control

We want to indicate that as the city we have a long-standing relationship with the church, and we have been supporting it in previous years based on the assessment the city has done on the state of infrastructure on the ground.

Last year, the city allocated R3m for sanitation service and R1m for waste removal.

The city has recently approved R5.8m to refurbish communal ablution facilities in eBuhleni in the current financial year. However, for us to adequately address the challenge of sanitation infrastructure for the church, we will require a funding of over R60m. Therefore, the allocation of R5.8m

will be spent on basic refurbishment and the contractor has already established site to carry out this work.

These interventions are made because of public health considerations given the large number of people that attend the pilgrimage.

In addition to the issue of hygiene, the Nazareth Baptist Church is the largest congregation in the Southern hemisphere with a membership of over 5 million. The pilgrimage also draws thousands of devotees from all corners of the country into the city which gives us a great platform to promote the city as a preferred destination for tourism and investment.

We want to assure the church that this is not going to be a once off intervention as you know that we have been supporting you for the past three years and we will continue to do so because we value your contribution to the society.

It is an undeniable fact that since its founding in 1910, the church played a key role in the liberation struggle. It has also been instrumental in advocating for the building of strong family structures and preservation of our cultural heritage. It is for this reason that as part of our effort to promote tourism in the city, we have established Inanda Heritage Route which incorporates historical sites of Durban including the Shembe Church.

On behalf of the people of eThekwini, we wish the congregants of the Nazareth Baptist Church a safe and peaceful pilgrimage.

At this point, let me allow my counterparts from iLembe and Ndwedwe to outline the support they will be providing as the host municipalities.