WELCOMING ADDRESS BY ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR, CLLR CYRIL XABA AT THE AFRICA'S TRAVEL INDABA, 13 MAY 2023

• Programme director

• Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa: His Excellency, Paul Mashatile

• Minister of Tourism in the Republic of South Africa: Ms. Patricia De Lille

• KwaZulu-Natal Premier: Mr Thami Ntuli

• Ministers from various countries

• KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs: Rev. Musa Zondi

• High Commissioners present

• Members of the Diplomatic Corp

• Chairperson of the Portfolio Committee on Tourism: Ms Mnganga-Gcabashe as well as the Portfolio Committee Member, Mr Moodley

• South African Tourism Board Chairperson: Professor Gregory Davids and Marketing Committee Chairperson, Mr Oupa Pilane

• KwaZulu-Natal Tourism and Film Authority Board Chairperson: Dr. Sibusiso Ndebele and all Board Members present

• Inkosi Albert Luthuli Convention Centre Chairperson and all Board Members present

• Department of Tourism Director-General: Mr Victor Vele and all government officials present

• South African Tourism Chief Executive Officer: Ms Nombulelo Guliwe

• The Business Sector

• Delegates

• Members of the media

• Ladies and gentlemen

Good Morning

It is both an honour and a privilege to welcome you all to the 2025 Africa's Travel Indaba.

This gathering is far more than a mere discussion forum - it serves as the driving force behind Africa's tourism aspirations. It is a dynamic continental platform that stimulates investment, facilitates trade opportunities, and highlights the rich diversity and excellence of African destinations.

This year, we are projecting that Indaba will exceed last year's achievements by hosting over 9,600 delegates, generating R232 million in direct spend, and injecting R575 million into our local economy. These numbers are not mere statistics - they are a powerful endorsement of tourism as a key driver for economic transformation in city and the province.

Held under the theme, "Unlimited Africa," this year, we seek to position our city not just as a destination—but as a dynamic, investable ecosystem where culture, commerce, and community converge.

From the moment visitors land at King Shaka International Airport, the journey through Durban begins with rolling hills of sugar cane and the glimmer of the Indian Ocean. As they travel along our scenic coastline, they are introduced to a city alive with opportunity and authenticity.

Whether it is the vibrancy of Florida Road, now undergoing a major facelift, the immersive wonder of uShaka Marine World, the history-rich Valley of a Thousand Hills, or the tranquil Durban Botanic Gardens, our city offers more than a getaway—it provides an unforgettable experience.

As part of our effort to make Durban the gateway to unlimited Africa we are investing heavily on improving our infrastructure especially in key economic and tourism nodes. Through this, we are transforming our city into a place that does not only attract visitors, but also inspires investment, innovation, and inclusion.

We have intensified the maintenance of road, electricity, water and sanitation infrastructure, with noticeable improvements in places like the uMhlanga promenade and key transport corridors. We are also reviving Urban Improvement Precincts with a special focus on crime prevention and cleanliness to make the city more welcoming and visitor-friendly.

We are also fast-tracking the upgrade of iconic sport venues such as Moses Mabhida Stadium and Kings Park with an amount of R236 million and R44 million respectively. These investments will strengthen Durban's capacity to host world-class events and contribute significantly to enhancing the city's visual appeal and infrastructure.

Furthermore, Durban is in the midst of a catalytic investment boom. Let me highlight just a few key projects currently transforming the city's skyline:

• The R1.5 billion Westown Square lifestyle precinct, now open and transforming our Outer West;

• The visionary multi-million Durban Eye, a future landmark attraction;

• Strategic mega-projects such as Durban Film City, Cornubia, Virginia Airport redevelopment, and the Brickworks Logistics Hub—with over R100 billion in combined investment.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are proud that we are one of the few Municipalities in the country that are functional and financially sustainable. The business confidence in the city is currently sitting at 56% which indicates that we are addressing some of the service delivery challenges our residents and businesses have been complaining about including intermittent water supply.

We are addressing this challenge by accelerating the implementation of the water and sanitation turnaround strategy with a special focus on reducing non-revenue water. As part of the trading services reforms by the National Treasury, plans are also afoot to turnaround the electricity and waste management services.

We have no doubt that these reforms will help us to cope with the ever-growing demands that are placed on the city.

I am confident that working together with our social partners, we will build a city of our dreams. My optimism stems from the fact that we continue to work diligently to make Durban the premier destination of choice for investment and tourism. We are pleased that these efforts are being recognised as demonstrated by the fact that:

• We are home to Africa's Travel Indaba,

• The Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre, the venue that is hosting the Indaba has been voted 18th time winner of Africa's Leading Meetings & Conference Centre by the World Travel Awards

• Officially recognised as Africa's Leading Festival and Events Destination.

• A five-time Diamond Arrow Award winner at the 2024 PMR. africa KZN Business Excellence Awards for being the best performing municipality on social upliftment, job creation, tourism attraction, foreign and local investment attraction

These achievements are not by chance. They are a product of hard work and continued collaboration with the private sector.

Ladies and Gentlemen, while we build, we also promote. Through our Endless Fun Season campaign, we have curated a calendar of culture, cuisine, lifestyle, and adventure. From sunset cruises, horseback rides on the beach, and culinary markets, to cultural safaris and local fashion showcases, Durban offers an abundance of experiences—because truly, Durban has more.

Ladies and gentlemen, as a city, we have an unenviable task this year since this is the final year of our hosting contract for Indaba. We are determined to work flat out to demonstrate why Durban deserves to remain the home of Africa's premier tourism showcase.

In closing, we want to reiterate that Durban is more than a destination—it is a gateway, a platform, a story of evolution and the pulse of unlimited Africa.

We invite you to partner with us in this journey of growth, innovation, and excellence. Let us continue to work together to build a city and a continent where tourism drives economic growth, inclusion and prosperity.

As we roll the red carpet to welcome our visitors, we want to say that Durban is open for business and we are ready for the world.

Thank you.