ADDRESS BY ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR, CLLR MXOLISI KAUNDA AT THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S MONTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS MONTH COMMEMORATION, 28 MARCH 2021, INKOSI ALBERT LUTHULI INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE, DURBAN

- Programme Director
- Distinguished guests
- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon,

It is an honour and privilege to join you today as we continue to celebrate the immense contribution made by women in the struggle for freedom and equal rights globally.

The International Women's Month which was commemorated on the 8th of March themed: **"Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world"**, highlighted the triumph of many women who are

fighting every day for their basic right to be respected.

At the same time, South Africa commemorated the Human Rights Day on March 21, marking 61 years since the Sharpeville massacre when the apartheid government killed 69 innocent people who were fighting against the harsh pass laws.

These two significant days teach us that the fight for justice and equal rights is a collective responsibility, so the demand we make for women emancipation is a human's right issue. We all know that women suffered triple oppression as they were discriminated on the basis of race, class and gender.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is also during the month of March that the Zulu nation and the country bade its last goodbye to Isilo Samabandla, Uhlangalomhlabathi, Goodwill Zwelithini kaBhekuZulu. As we continue to mourn Ongangezwelakhe, we are reminded to celebrate and preserve our cultural heritage.

It is therefore fitting that today's commemoration of the International

Women's Month is celebrated through a stage play entitled: "**Queen Nandi, The Musical"**. The story of Queen Nandi is an inspiration to us as a nation as it demonstrates the critical leadership role women have always played in our society.

Again, as we speak, Undlunkulu Mantfombi has officially been appointed as the caretaker of the Kingdom of AmaZulu until the next King is announced. This is proof yet again that women occupy a special place and have a significant role in our society. In many instances, they have executed these tasks with aplomb.

Therefore, we would like to express our gratitude to Edmund Mhlongo and KwaMashu Community Advanced Projects for using their creative talent to educate us about the importance of acknowledging and celebrating women.

As we celebrate Queen Nandi today, we must remember those women in rural areas who sometimes feel forgotten and invisible because of the daily struggles they face, trying to keep fires burning in their homes.

We must intensify our campaign to encourage women to come together and form cooperatives and get into the mainstream economy. We are inspired by those women who run successful establishments that sell vegetables, not only to feed their families but, to contribute towards food security.

We all know of women who single-handedly keep the family structures intact while juggling between work and ensuring children have food on the table. This demonstrates, in practical terms, the women's ability to multi-task.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are proud to say that the governing party in eThekwini Municipality, the African National Congress (ANC) has a clear policy direction when it comes to gender equity.

The ANC remains committed to the 50-50 gender representation policy as seen at various levels of government – be it national, provincial or local.

This is important because girls and young women who aspire to succeed in their chosen careers will know that they have an equal opportunity to

excel in various sectors of the society and participate meaningfully in the economic activities of the country.

In conclusion, let us all work together for the total liberation of women and fight against any form of gender discrimination in our communities.

Struggle stalwart and former President Nelson Mandela understood the importance of gender equality when he said, and I quote: “Freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression.”

I thank you.