WELCOMING REMARKS BY ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY SPEAKER, CLLR WEZIWE THUSI AT THE WREATH LAYING CEREMONY FOR DR JL DUBE, 11 FEBRUARY 2021

- Programme Director
- MEC for Economic for Arts, Culture, Sport and Recreation, Ms Hlengiwe Mavimbela
- Dr JL Dube family
- Members of the Provincial Legislature
- Councillors
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Sanibonani. Good morning.

It is a distinct honour and privilege for me to welcome you all to this important occasion – to honour our struggle hero and founder of the African National Congress Dr JL Dube.

On this important day, we must pause and reflect on the selfless contribution this struggle stalwart made towards the struggle for freedom and celebrate his life and legacy.

UMafukuzela was passionate about youth development. He fought gallantly all his life for the emancipation of those who were sidelined by the brutal apartheid system and worked hard to uplift the poor. When he established Ohlange Institute, he wanted to create a black class of self-reliant and educated entrepreneurs.

We have no doubt that today he is rejoicing when

Mandela's example of leadership continues to inspire those of us who have been sent by the African National Congress (ANC) to serve our communities at various levels of government.

Ladies and gentlemen, for us to be on par with other nations in this critical time of the 4th Industrial Revolution, we must produce globally competitive graduates. I am confident this free Wi-Fi will give access to valuable resources and help sharpen the skills of our young people – channeling them towards relevant career paths in line with addressing the country's skills deficit.

Our country is grappling with the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and we have all been forced to adapt to the new normal, we hope our communities take advantage of having access to free internet by equipping themselves with knowledge.

It was at the 2017 ANC National Conference when we resolved as the governing party that we would encourage efforts by government and the private sector to deploy broadband infrastructure and ensure accessibility of free Wi-Fi as a tool of economic development.

As eThekwini Municipality we support all government initiatives that seek to build Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure, community networks and free internet. With today's launch, we have an opportunity to bridge the digital divide which has been exposed yet again by the advent of COVID-19.

We witnessed during the early stages of lockdown children from poor communities, unlike their counterparts in well-resourced schools – could not effectively participate in home-schooling programmes. Sadly, this meant

these students would permanently be left behind, resulting in them struggling to catch up.

Programme director, we must start planning for the future – a future when the world would have hopefully defeated this invisible enemy or learned to coexist with COVID-19.

Our goal to create comprehensive and inclusive economic growth continues, even under such uncertain circumstance. Therefore, we must leverage the rich history of this area to entice tourists to visit this beautiful part of our city.

We acknowledge that tourism has taken a big knock, but we must be ready when the time comes and must be prepared to take advantage of our existing programmes to change the lives of our people.

In conclusion, we must all work together to ensure that we establish creative and innovative ways that will empower our communities and prepare them for the 4th Industrial Revolution. Our technological advancement initiatives should address the fundamental challenge that perpetuates inequality in our country.

I thank you.