REMARKS BY MAYOR CLLR. MXOLISI KAUNDA AT THE ETHEKWINI MATRIC AWARDS CEREMONY, 27 JANUARY 2022, DURBAN ICC

- Programme Director
- Speaker, Councillor Thabani Nyawose
- Whip of Council and Acting Chairperson for Infrastructure and Human Settlements: Councillor Thembo Ntuli
- Chairperson of Governance and Human Resources: Cllr Nkosenhle Madlala
- EXCO members
- Councillors
- City Manager, Mr. Musa Mbhele
- Deputy City Managers
- Our Sponsors: Nedbank, MTN and Afrotainment
- Department of Education officials
- Principals
- Educators
- Parents
- Learners
- Distinguished Guests

- Members of the media
- Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

It is with great pride and excitement that we are gathered here today to celebrate and congratulate the eThekwini Matric Class of 2022.

Today we delighted to honour learners from eThekwini who have outdone themselves by obtaining outstanding results in the 2022 National Senior Certificate exams despite many adversities.

Ladies and gentlemen, you will agree with me that since 2020 it has not been an easy academic journey for our learners as the education sector has been severely affected by many challenges.

During the year 2020 and 2021, learners studied under conditions of a national state of disaster as a result of the COVID-19. You will recall that some learners attended school on a rotational system to avoid overcrowding in classrooms as per the COVID-19 protocols of social distancing. Many

learners studied at home with minimum interaction with a teacher. Others lost their loved ones to the pandemic and had to grapple with both emotional trauma and academic challenges.

Also, in 2021 we were hit by a wave of civil unrest which disrupted learning and teaching in many parts of the city. Last year, eThekwini was severely affected by the April and May floods which damaged infrastructure, displaced families and disrupted education. Many learners were placed among the flood victims in mass care centres that were set up in eThekwini to temporarily accommodate those families whose homes were destroyed by the flood disaster.

Despite these challenges our learners remained resilient, and they have triumphed against adversity. While the province of KwaZulu-Natal Matric Class of 2022 achieved a historic 83 percent, a significant increase from the 77 percent recorded in 2021, the two education districts in eThekwini achieved 80 percent and above. Umlazi district obtained 82.8 percent while Pinetown district recorded 80.5 percent.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the ANC government has declared 2023 as the year of decisive action to advance the people's interests including education. To give practical meaning to this call, eThekwini Municipality will continue to invest in youth and education.

The municipality offers financial assistance to academically deserving learners, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds who have done exceptionally well, to further their studies in public higher education institutions.

Ladies and gentlemen, through the eThekwini Matric Awards ceremony, which has been a calendar event for more than two decades, we will recognise schools that obtained 100% matric pass rate, schools that improved by more than 30 percent in the matric pass rate, top ten learners from eThekwini and top ten learners from disadvantaged schools which are categorised by the Department of Education as schools under Quantile 1 to 3 ranking system.

During this prestigious ceremony, full bursaries will be awarded to learners who have been accepted to further their studies on a full-time basis at any

South African public education institutions. These bursaries cover tuition fees, accommodation, study material and meal allowance for the duration of the programme, provided that the learner performs well. To date, the Municipality has more than 70 students who are beneficiaries of this bursary. A total budget of R10.4 million has been set aside to assist with bursaries in this current financial year. This budget includes cost for the existing beneficiaries.

Lindani Khuzwayo, who was in the Matric Class of 2019 is one of the beneficiaries. Khuzwayo was amongst the eThekwini's top ten learners from disadvantaged schools. The Municipality has academically supported this BSC Electrical Engineering student with a full bursary from 2020 to date.

As eThekwini Municipality, we have invested more than half a million towards Khuzwayo's studies as he is now doing his fourth year at the University of Cape Town. Throughout the years of study, Khuzwayo has performed well academically, and we are certain that he has a bright future ahead of him. There are many more beneficiaries like Khuzwayo, some have obtained their qualifications and are doing well in their field of study.

Ladies and gentlemen, the Municipality also offers a Student Relief Fund which was established to assist learners from disadvantaged backgrounds who cannot afford to register in a public institution to pursue or further their studies. This financial assistance is strictly for registration purposes only while the applicant waits for NSFAS financial approval.

In the previous academic year, the Municipality has assisted 103 students to secure space at public South African education institutions through this initiative.

To date, the Municipality has received 528 applications for the 2023 academic year and close to R800 thousand has been set aside to assist with registration fees.

Programme director, let me also take this opportunity to thank the teachers, learners, and parents for playing important roles respectively – teachers being at school to teach and learners being in class on time to learn. It is clear 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.

As the country celebrates 29 years of democracy this year, we can proudly say that the lives of the people of South Africa, particularly the black child, have changed for the better. Guided by the Freedom Charter which demands that, **"Education shall be free, compulsory, universal and equal for all children,"** we have made positive strides in making education accessible to all. The No-fee schools, subsidized public transport and the school nutrition programmes have ensured increase in school attendance by learners from poor households.

Ladies and gentlemen allow me to take this opportunity to convey our sincere gratitude to the sponsors: Nedbank, MTN and Afrotainment. Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to investing in the youth through education. This life-changing initiative would not have been impactful and successful if you were not onboard.

Once again, we would like to commend our learners that despite the challenges you encountered, you remained focused on the task at hand of completing your matric with an exceptional performance.

This level of resilience and commitment gives us hope about the future of our country. We trust that the Matric Class of 2023 will follow on your footsteps as you have demonstrated that it is possible to succeed against all odds.

Again, the eThekwini Municipality congratulates the Matric Class of 2022 for achieving this great milestone. Give yourselves a huge pat on the back for your outstanding performance. Please continue flying the eThekwini flag high! We are proud of you! Well done and all the best for the academic journey that lies ahead!

Thank you for your attention.