WELCOMING ADDRESS BY THE ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY MAYOR, CLLR MXOLISI KAUNDA AT THE KWAZULU-NATAL ECONOMIC COUNCIL SUMMIT, 29 APRIL 2021 INKOSI ALBERT LUTHULI CONVENTION CENTRE

- Programme Director
- MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs: Mr Ravi Pillay
- Members of the KZN Economic Council
- Senior Government Officials
- Distinguished Guests
- Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning

It is a distinct honour for us as eThekwini Municipality to welcome you to this important summit which brings all social partners together to build the

economy of our province which has been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

This KZN Economic Council summit is an important platform for social partnership and consensus-building among key stakeholders as we seek to build a resilient economy and to address the triple threat of poverty, unemployment and inequality.

We hold a view that it is only through the concerted efforts and unity of purpose by all social partners that we can address the socio-economic challenges plaguing our society.

Let me take this opportunity to applaud MEC Pillay for convening this summit at a time when we are still grappling with the devastating impact of this deadly pandemic. We strongly believe that one of the issues we must discuss during this summit is the progress we are making in the implementation of our economic recovery plan as a province. Where there are bottlenecks, we need to propose practical solutions to unlock obstacles that impede progress.

Colleagues, time is of essence, we must ensure that in a short space of time, all our sectors of the economy fully recover and create jobs for our people.

The majority of our people face an uncertain future as their jobs continue to be on the line and statistics indicate that over 2 million people have already lost jobs during this difficult period.

Therefore, as we deliberate and map the path towards salvaging our economy, we must have these people in mind. Their hopes for a better tomorrow hinge on us taking bold steps that will revive our economy.

MEC, as an economic hub of the province, the leadership of eThekwini Municipality took a bold decision last year to establish the EThekwini Economic Council to complement the work your department is doing at a provincial level.

We are pleased to report that this council has already established 15 workstreams, focusing on various sectors of the economy. These workstreams are currently seized with the responsibility of developing plans

to unlock the economic potential of the following sectors which are critical in driving Socio-Economic Recovery:

- **The Manufacturing Sector**- improving our Manufacturing Capacity base to attract investment and support local manufacturers.

- Fast tracking the Radical Agrarian Socio-Economic Transformation Programme in the **Agriculture and Agro-Processing sector**;

- **Improving Information Communications Technology**- we are saying that the time to migrate to a smart city is now and therefore we need to accelerate digital connectivity in our city.

- **Implement Renewable Energy and Energy Reforms**. For the economy to grow we need energy security.

- **Tourism Development** – we strongly believe that the Post COVID-19 Economy will create a new way of doing tourism and we need to take advantage of the transformation opportunities in this sector.

- **Transport and Logistics sector**. We must work towards making our transport system and port operations globally competitive.
- **Unlock Oceans Economy.** Durban is a coastal city, and we need to take advantage of our vast coastal and marine resources.

As part of translating plans emanating from these workstreams into action, we have established a Mayoral Jobs Creation and Skills Revolution War Room which works closely with the economic council. The War Room focuses on, among other things, implementation of decisions emanating from the council within specified time frames. This war room concept addresses the challenge of lack of implementation of plans by government.

We are confident that together, we will rebuild an economy that places people at the centre of our recovery strategies. We want to reiterate that our success will depend largely on our commitment as social partners.

However, we want to caution you that rebuilding our economy is not going to be an easy task, considering that even before COVID-19, we had our own underlying socio-economic challenges which include:

- High unemployment rate;
- Low technical skills base;
- The monopolistic nature of our economy; and
- Unreliable energy supply.

These are some of the issues we must discuss as social partners and find practical solutions.

In closing, let me remind this summit that our people want to see radical change. Therefore, this summit gives us an opportunity to come up with tangible and impactful proposals that will put our economy on a growth trajectory and create much-needed jobs.

I thank you.