



**Address by Her Worship, the Mayor
Cllr Zandile Gumede on the Occasion of the Essence
Festival Launch**

**01 September 2016 – 08h00
Coastlands Hotel on the Ridge – Peter Mokaba Ridge**

Address by Mayor Cllr Zandile Gumede at the Essence Festival Launch,
01 September 2016
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- Programme Director,
- Members of the eThekweni Executive Committee,
- Essence President Ms Michelle Ebanks,
- City Manager Mr Sibusiso Sithole,
- Fellow Councillors,
- Deputy City Managers,
- Heads and Deputy Heads,
- Senior Management,

- The Essence Delegation,
- Speakers in different topics,
- Stakeholders and partners,
- Distinguished guests and dignitaries,
- Members of the media,
- Municipal officials,
- Ladies and gentlemen,
- All protocol observed,

Good morning!

It is with honour that I announce the inaugural international edition of the ESSENCE Festival that will take place in our City in from 8 to 13 November 2016. I extend a special welcome to ESSENCE President Ms Michelle Ebanks and the ESSENCE delegation.

Ladies and gentlemen, I applaud the ESSENCE leaders for hosting this multi-day entertainment, empowerment and cultural Festival in Durban.

You couldn't have chosen a better place to host this prestigious Festival than the tourism destination of choice and award-winning City of Durban.

On behalf of the people of eThekweni, we look forward to this upcoming major event. I am confident that the Festival will provide an invaluable platform for our entrepreneurs and artists to network, gain valuable information and build relationships with international experts for locals to be globally competitive.

Ladies and gentlemen, the ESSENCE Festival complements Durban's international image as an event capital. Durban is well positioned as an events destination for global niche tourism.

We plan to take advantage of this positioning to create a platform for growth, socio-economic development, and empowerment of the City's residents.

The hosting of this ground breaking Festival is in line with our City's Economic Development Strategy to enhance the economy. This will contribute to job creation.

Programme Director, the City has a three-year partnership with ESSENCE. The partnership will focus on the development of women and the youth in business.

It will also present exciting and informative ideas to equip our small businesses through empowerment seminars across various sectors.

This Festival is expected to draw thousands of global visitors to Durban and will have an economic impact of about R250 million annually to the local economy while creating over 3 thousand job opportunities.

Ladies and gentlemen, this will boost tourism and economic growth in eThekweni. It is also in line with the City's Visitor Marketing Strategy which is aimed at increasing visitors coming to Durban.

The partnership will also aid the City to establish its own annual events such as the KwaZulu-Natal Imbizo to empower artists and production businesses with skills while providing a platform for them to showcase their work.

Through this partnership with ESSENCE, we also want to showcase our cultural diversity, arts and heritage as well as business acumen to South Africa and the rest of the world.

Our vision is that Durban should be “Africa’s most caring and liveable city by 2030”, and this festival will not only help us to create a diverse economy but also make Durban a desirable place to live in.

The major event will form part of the 18th Durban Business Fair with the first three days of the Festival dedicated to business seminars.

We have seen, ladies and gentlemen, in countries like China and Brazil that small business plays a vital role in growing and developing the economy of a country.

If we are to see meaningful economic growth in our country, we need to invest in initiatives that drive and promote small business development. We must inculcate a sense of entrepreneurship in our youth and also encourage women to take a keen interest in business.

We want to make small business the pillar and the backbone of our economy. This would open avenues for diverse business opportunities that allow them to prosper into big businesses and creates employment.

Cultural economy is one of our strategic pillars for our radical economic transformation and it has potential to create thousands of job opportunities. So, as part of our strategy, we are using our cultural artists to promote our City.

Programme Director, confirmed Speakers for this year's Festival will include renowned television host, actor, author and radio personality Steve Harvey; distinguished civil rights activist, community leader and television and radio host Reverend Al Sharpton; and accomplished singer and songwriters Estelle and Kelly Price.

In addition, Grammy Award-winning singer and songwriter Yolanda Adams will be honoured during the event's All-Star Gospel Tribute. Additional appearances will be announced in due course.

With those few words, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to officially launch the ESSENCE Durban Festival. We are certainly look forward to hosting the prestigious event that is set to benefit our City economically and socially.

I am hoping that the Festival will be a gathering of brilliant ideas and will be the best ESSENCE festival in history.

Thank you!