



Welcome Address by His Worship, the Mayor Cllr James Nxumalo on the Occasion of the World Murugan Bhakti Conference Welcome Reception

04 August 2016 – 18h00

Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre

- Programme Directors, Mr Eric Apelgren,
- President of the Conference, His Holiness Balayogi Swamigal,
- Organising Committee Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer of the South African Murugan Bhakthi Centre,
- Officials from the International and Governance Relations Unit,
- Speakers in different topics,
- Stakeholders and partners,
- Conference delegation,
- Our international friends,
- Distinguished guests and dignitaries,
- Ladies and gentlemen,
- All protocol observed,

Good evening!

It gives me great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to delegates of the World Murugan Bhakti Conference. Welcome to the City of Durban, the gateway to Africa.

Our City is undoubtedly a tourist and conference destination of choice, with an impressive track-record of successfully hosting numerous major international events over the years.

It is therefore fitting that the World Muruga Bhakthi Conference, held on African soil for the first time, is hosted right here.

Ladies and gentlemen, it must be noted that this Conference is being held at a historical venue, Kendra Hall in Greyville. This venue was established in 1993 by representatives from all the established Gujarati Organisations in the Greater Durban area to build a much needed temple and community centre with a purpose to serve the religious and cultural needs of the community.

Significantly, this Conference could not have been held at a better venue because it will bring together different individuals from all over the world to facilitate interaction with the International Community to exchange cultural and research ideas, communicate different perspectives and promote developmental activities thereby broadening the South Africa experience.

I am impressed to see that this Conference has a line-up of speakers from Australia, Malaysia and India who will highlight the importance of culture in a diverse population

Durban is hosting this Conference on behalf of South Africa - a country that is often referred to as the rainbow nation. This is indicative of the numerous cultures and religions that make us a unique country.

Closer to home ladies and gentlemen, eThekweni is just as diverse and is home to an interesting melting pot of cultures. It is important not to let these differences separate us, but we should accept, celebrate and learn more about our differences. To promote social cohesion, our Municipality has implemented a number of programmes and initiatives to ensure that this goal is achieved.

The importance of social cohesion is highlighted in our Integrated Development Plan – a mandatory 5-year-plan which the South African local government is required to compile to determine the development needs of the Municipality. Social cohesion is defined as bonds that link members of a social group to one another, and to a group as a whole.

Programme Director, the two Municipal Units that ensure implementation through social cohesion programmes through arts, culture, heritage and other creative platforms are International and Governance Relations Unit as well as Parks, Recreation and Culture Unit.

The programmes encourage dialogue on issues of social cohesion and promote educational awareness for enhanced social cohesion. While the initiatives have yielded positive results over the years, more can still be done to promote social cohesion.

Recently, our Municipality hosted a successful 2nd eThekweni Social Cohesion Conference. The conference covered critical areas of social cohesion to help take Durban forward in the realisation of a truly united and prosperous City. This also gave our City an opportunity to reflect on its social cohesion status and to shape the thinking of eThekweni residents towards building a socially cohesive City.

I am sure a positive way forward to promote social cohesion in our City will emerge from the robust discussion set to take place at the Conference. We welcome any feedback that will positively impact our City.

Once again, welcome to international visitors and we are proud to host this important Conference. A special welcome to His Holiness Balayogi Swamigal. Thank you for choosing our City to host this major Conference. I trust you will have an enjoyable stay in our beautiful City.

Thank you!