



**Welcome Address by Her Worship, the Mayor
Cllr Zandile Gumede on the Occasion of the eThekweni
Women Empowerment Programme**

**31 August 2016 – 08h00
Inkosi Albert Luthuli International Convention Centre**

- Programme Director,
- Chief Executive Officer of Innate Investment Solutions, Ms Lynette Ntuli,
- Boxer House Brands and Small Business Development Manager, Mr Gary Larkan,
- Ms Zama Khanyile who will address us on the Women Empowerment Fund and the National Empowerment Fund,
- Ms Nosihle Mthethwa, a representative of the Coca-Cola Beverages South Africa,
- Small Enterprise Finance Agency KwaZulu-Natal Acting Regional Head, Ms Sinegugu Ndlovu,
- Captains of Industry,
- Businesswomen,
- Speakers in different topics,
- Stakeholders and partners,
- Our panel moderators,
- Distinguished guests and dignitaries,
- Our Municipal officials,
- Ladies and gentlemen,
- All protocol observed,

Women empowerment is a priority for our Municipality. It is the City's vision to encourage and develop women to actively participate in the mainstream economy. We want women to make their mark in male dominated fields.

We want women to establish and run sustainable businesses and create jobs. We want women to transfer skills, empower and inspire others in their respective career fields and communities. Our City is committed to creating the space for women to succeed economically.

Ladies and gentlemen, I address you this morning with a clear vision on women empowerment in our City. Our programmes are an indication that the development of women is key to the growth of South Africa's economy.

Women have been identified as a population that needs strategic attention for government development programmes to succeed.

Women find themselves faced with issues of poverty, unemployment and still lack business opportunities and financial resources.

Going forward, socio-economic imbalances of the past must be addressed. The eThekweni Women Empowerment Programme will present opportunities to women, provide them with the necessary information and assist with resources.

Programme Director, women empowerment is a top priority for our government. When President Jacob Zuma launched the Status of Women in the South Africa Economy report in 2015, he said the inclusion of women in the economy must take centre stage. This directive was implemented by all three spheres of government.

I agree with this approach that puts women at the centre of our economic development strategy. Our Municipality has heeded the call made by our President through various programmes that aim to empower our women in various sectors. We must remember that the topic on liberating women is a never-ending discussion. Therefore, we should constantly explore ways of empowering our women.

For the 2016/17 financial year, we have allocated about R2 million for different women empowerment programmes. From 2011 to date, more than six thousand women have benefited from the various programmes through skills development, training and networking sessions.

Since the inception of this programme in 2006, we have had many success stories. Today, in our presence we have women who are products of our empowerment programmes and they will share their inspiring stories with us to encourage other women.

We also have retailers who are part of today's programme. They will share with us the available opportunities in the retail sector.

If you are interested and would like more information, you are most welcome to approach the retail representative.

Allow me to take this opportunity to inform you about the annual Mayoral Women in Business Awards. These awards recognise women who are making a difference in their communities through business initiatives. Women must nominate and support each other for growth and prosperity.

Going forward, I wish to reiterate to women that opportunities are in abundance. Use platforms like these to network, gather information and make your mark. I would like to encourage you to participate in the various women empowerment programmes facilitated and co-ordinated by our Municipality.

We understand that the full participation of women is necessary for long-term, sustainable economic growth and social progression in the City.

I am confident that our Municipality will continue to support and invest in women empowerment programmes and provide them with the relevant skills and support in order for them to succeed.

Ladies, the ball is in court!

Thank you!