

## Welcoming remarks by Cllr Zama Sokhabase at Women in Energy Dialogue

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Programme Director,

Minister Nkhensani Kubayi,

Deputy Minister, Ambassador Thembi Majola,

Government officials,

Captains of the industry,

Ladies and gentlemen,

All protocol observed,

Sanibonani, on behalf of the mayor of eThekweni – Cllr Zandile Gumede, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you and thank you for choosing this city to host this prestigious event.

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.

We are pleased that you decided to bring this event during the month of August when we celebrate the role of women in our liberation struggle. Unfortunately our struggle continues.

Women's Month takes place against a backdrop of an increase in the levels of violence and brutality against women and children in our society. Since the start of the year, a number of incidents of violence and women abuse have made headlines.

This year's event also takes place against a backdrop of a poor performing economy. Invariably, women will be most affected by the economic decline and bear the brunt of its resultant negative economic and social effects.

Programme Director,

We hope that this gathering will be able to assist us to deal with issues that are facing women in this sector. We must look at issues that are faced by women who are still collecting wood to prepare for their meal. Women who have to risk dark forests full of snakes in order to ensure that their children have something to eat. In Durban we are passionate about our women and are blessed to have a women mayor who care about our women.

We as women have heard number of slogans that speak about women empowerment and however we have seen less progress. We say enough is enough, we want this radical economic transformation for ourselves and the nation. There is a say that says "if you educate a women, you are educating a whole nation." So today we say, if you empower women – you are empowering the whole nation.

We are confident in the Mayor and the Minister that we will soon realise economic freedom for women of our country.

Through our policies we are ensuring the full participation of women in the economy and driving an inclusive economy. The Mayor has launched the Radical Economic transformation framework that will cater for women in business and professionals.

The promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is central to our efforts to combat poverty and stimulate sustainable development.

We are grateful to the ANC Government for introducing the Gender Equality Bill to accelerate the empowerment of women and attain 50/50 gender parity for the country.

The Empowerment of women is everyone's business and needs the support of government, business, labour and civil society.

Let us all work to remove the barriers which prevent women from entering and thriving in the labour market.

Over the last 23 years of democracy great strides have been made to ensure that women enjoy the same rights as their male counterparts in education, employment, property, inheritance and justice.

It includes greater representation in politics, the judiciary, corporate boards and an overall improvements in livelihoods for women and mothers in our rural areas.

We believe that South Africa is ready to be led by a woman president and women in South Africa are more than capable to lead in all sectors of this country

In Closing

We need to continue to ensure that women have access to economic opportunities, basic services as well as safety and security in every community.

We need to triple our efforts in ensuring that every village has water, sanitation, electricity, good schools, clinics, land for farming and food production.

As this ANC government, we are ready to work with women to ensure that the dividend of freedom and democracy can be enjoyed by women in the country, especially the poor and the working class.