

Welcome Address by Mayor Zandile Gumede at SALGA National Assembly, held at Durban ICC, 11 December 2018

Programme Director,

His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa,

President of SALGA, Cllr Parks Tau,

Premier of KwaZulu-Natal, Hon Willies Mchunu,

Minister of COGTA, Dr Zweli Mkhize,

NEC Members of SALGA,

MECs present,

Members of Parliament,

Fellow Councillors,

Captains of industries,

Members of the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Sanibonani,

Let me take this opportunity and welcome you to this prestigious assembly. We would like to thank SALGA for bringing this gathering to the city of Durban. You are in a right place at the right time during season of festivities.

This is the heart of the economy of KwaZulu-Natal and one of the largest economies in the country. Local and foreign investments are flowing into Durban, as it continues to ascend to its rightful place of recognition as a world class city.

By 2030, eThekweni aims to be the 'most caring, liveable city in Africa' which will be achieved through collaboration and partnership between business and government.

Local government as a sphere closest to our people on the ground is not only dynamic but is also very challenging. These challenges inter alia includes :

- inability to generate revenue and thus dependence on grants from the national and provincial government
- population growth fuelled by inward migration from rural areas and neighbouring countries to cities and towns in search of better economic opportunities
- service delivery protest fuelled by real and perceived lack of service delivery
- climate change impacts such as damage to infrastructure during flash floods, drought, loss of tourism opportunities due to destruction of ecological assets
- unfunded mandates due to gaps in the provision of services by provincial and national authorities
- high levels of crime in major urban centres,
- low citizens confidence in some municipalities,
- negative publicity from the mainstream media which constantly projects councillors as failures, uneducated and useless people,
- Inability to attract suitable and skilful talent due to uncompetitive salaries that local government pays

As leaders in this sphere of government we have a leadership responsibility to deliver services in an equitable manner despite these challenges

The above situation demands unwavering commitment from the leadership of local government as it has been demonstrated in a number of success stories. Cogta has recently recognized this service excellence by conferring awards to the municipalities that have done well in a number of functional areas.

As the leadership of SALGA, we stand combat ready to support municipalities in every way possible to help them deliver much needed services to the poor communities. In KZN province for example, SALGA has assisted in crafting and securing commitment to a Compact of Mayors against climate change. This is an initiative aimed committing all Mayors to the program of fighting climate change. SALGA has taken a bold and critical step to convene us as KZN Mayors and commit us to politically provide oversight on the issues of climate change within their respective areas.

Programme Director,

As we close the year of Mandela and Mama Sisulu, we have the opportunity for self-reflection in our municipalities. From the Global level, eThekweni Municipality has been actively advocating for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement.

Through many of the executive positions held by this city in Global Organizations such as the C40, African Forum for Urban Safety, United Cities and Local Government(UCLG), the Global Task Force for Local Governments, the city continues to be at the forefront for sustainability advocacy and global policy development. At this point I would also like to highlight that together with SALGA in November 2019, we will jointly host the UCLG's Triannual World Congress for Local Government in the City of Durban.

This will be an opportunity for South Africa to actively engage with our global counterparts and also to share innovation, challenges and best practices. We as a collective need to use this opportunity to build the capacity of our local municipalities.

In July 2018, EThekweni Municipality shared its SDG Localization and implementation experiences at the United Nations High Level Political Forum. Some of our staff have been actively involved together with UN Habitat in the development of Toolkits for the implementation of the SDG's. We have setup an Urban Safety Lab to ensure that we actively address the challenges of safety in our city. This safety Lab will not only be a repository of good practice for Durban, it would act as a Continental Hub for good practise on Urban Safety. Colleagues whilst we have worked actively in the global environment we have not forgotten our local citizens. The best practice that we have been exposed to has influenced how we implement projects at a local level. The city has embarked on reviewing its strategy with a focus on maximising impact on service delivery with a financial, economic and social development lens.

In closing, I would like to invite our delegates to use the opportunity to explore Durban and its beauty. We are the only city where you are allowed to mix business with pleasure. Go out and enjoy our lifestyle from the city to township, uMlazi and Umhlanga rocks.

Siyanamukela, zizweni nisekhaya.