



Welcome Address by His Worship, the Mayor Cllr James Nxumalo on the Occasion of the 21st International AIDS Conference Welcome Reception

**20 July 2016 – 18h00
Ushaka Marine World**

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- Programme Director, Dr Musa Gumede,
 - Members of the eThekweni Executive Committee,
 - Fellow Councillors,
 - Representatives of the provincial and local AIDS Council,
 - Our partners and stakeholders,
 - Our international friends,
 - EThekweni Civil Society,
 - Non-Governmental Organisations,
 - HIV/AIDS Activists,
 - Municipal officials,
 - Distinguished guests and dignitaries,
 - Ladies and gentlemen,
 - All protocol observed,

Esteemed guests and dignitaries, it gives me great pleasure to warmly welcome you to this evening's Welcome Reception.

Ladies and gentlemen, tonight is not about long speeches. It is a platform to unwind and relax after a long day at the 21st International AIDS Conference. In this regard, my address will be brief so that I allow you an opportunity to socialise and network. In light of this critical Conference, I would like to use this platform to speak about progress made by our Municipality in the fight against HIV and AIDS.

Programme Director, eThekweni has about 650 thousand people living with HIV – approximately 617 thousand adults and approximately 32 thousand children are infected with the virus.

In spite of these high numbers, there has been a dramatic improvement in the access of HIV treatment in government facilities. EThekweni has about 346 thousand patients who are taking antiretroviral treatment. This is the biggest antiretroviral programme provided by a municipal area in South Africa. This has led to improved quality of life and increased life expectancy.

We have reduced rates of mother to child transmission of HIV – from about 23 percent a few years ago to the current rate of less than 2 percent. We also have an improved TB cure and success rate from 48 percent a few years ago to around 80 percent.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are acutely aware of the challenges we still face and we are working towards overcoming them. Due to our large antiretroviral treatment programme, patient compliance to treatment and the need to stay on the treatment to avoid resistance is a big concern to government.

Also, new HIV infections especially amongst adolescent girls and young women are unacceptably high. There is also poor uptake of HIV testing by men and poor uptake of medical male circumcision by older men.

Furthermore, despite the provision of free treatment, a significant proportion of people infected with HIV present themselves at health care facilities with a CD4 count of less than 50 percent.

Ladies and gentlemen, our City remains optimistic that we will reach the 90-90-90 targets by 2020 and to eliminate new infections for both HIV and TB by 2030.

In closing, we understand that Municipalities are key to edging towards zero new infections by 2030. Therefore, we have worked earnestly over the past few years to contribute to the 90-90-90 targets.

Our Municipality has worked with government, development partners, civil society, traditional healers and businesses to minimise the impact of HIV and TB pandemic in our communities.

Thank you!