

**OPENING REMARKS BY EXECUTIVE MAYOR: CLLR ZRT GUMEDE –
City of Durban, RSA**

Programme Director,

Africa Regional Director – Hastings Chikoko,

C40 Network Head - Zach Toffias,

Municipal Officials,

Government institutions,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All protocol observed,

Sanibonani,

Good morning and welcome to Durban the most beautiful and warm city. As the Mayor of the eThekweni Metro and the Chairperson of the C40 African Regional Coordinating Committee and member of the C40 global steering committee, I wish to extend a very special welcome and appreciation to everyone present here today. I want to specifically acknowledge our officials and experts who have taken the time to travel to Durban and participate in this important workshop.

I also wish to welcome you to the Durban which is a truly world class city. The city of Durban has for the third consecutive year been ranked the top South African City with the highest quality of life in the international Mercer's 19th Quality of Life survey.

This C40 workshop coincides with the centenary anniversary of Oliver Reginald Tambo, who led our liberation movement, the ANC, for three decades in the struggle against Apartheid and racism in South Africa.

OR Tambo travelled all over the continent of Africa and the globe, mobilising international support for the struggle against racial discrimination and the oppressive Apartheid regime. He strongly believed in the role of multilateralism and the centrality of the UN.

It was for this reason that he spent a lot of time in the corridors and rooms of this UN building, mobilising members to take a firm action against the Apartheid regime in South Africa.

As we celebrate what would have been OR Tambo's centenary birthday, we take this opportunity as a country once again, to thank the UN and the international community for support and solidarity for our struggle for liberation.

In line with Tambo's global vision the city of Durban, we are also fully committed to the Paris Agreement and the 1.5% target. The Paris Agreement, which came into effect in November 2016, provides a very strong framework.

Speaking at the UN General Assembly, President Zuma clarified the South African position on Climate Change, when he said – **“These phenomena**

of devastating hurricanes, monsoons, floods and drought, are a proof that Climate Change is real and that if we do not act now, future generations will suffer untold consequences.”

The Paris Agreement on Climate Change is a milestone in the history of efforts to address Climate Change and all its consequences. We should resist all efforts to unravel and undermine the Paris Agreement.

Programme Director,

I am happy that this workshop takes place after our Durban Solid Waste scooped the Greenest Municipality Award and the Municipality was awarded the Govan Mbeki award for Best Metro for service delivery.

We have also won awards for green innovation in housing projects with regard to LED lighting, solar panels, jojo tanks, more efficient shower heads, heat pumps, etc. The City has been described by Conservation International as 1 of 34 “Biodiversity Hotspots” in the world. As you can see, we are clearly a world class city.

Our core values are sustainability; being an economically successful city; caring city; smart city; poverty reduction and a democratic & equal city. Our vision is to become the most caring and livable city in Africa by 2030. We are certainly committed to transform our governance, social,

development and economic systems in order to effectively respond to climate change.

We are committed to the triple bottom line, developing a green economy, our climate change strategy, environmental awareness campaigns, the rollout of our BRT also known as GO! Durban, the acquisition of green buses, and alternate sources of energy and water. We have also rolled out several major sustainable development projects relating to wastewater treatment works, aqueducts, solar power, wind power, hydropower, gas-to-electricity, Cool Durban, amongst other such projects.

Our City has already implemented a number of actions that aim to mitigate the impacts of climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. We do this to both accomplish the commitment we made through the Durban Climate Change Strategy and show support for the Paris Agreement.

We are among the committed global cities that have signed up to the Compact of Mayors because I believe that cities play an important role in achieving the pledges national governments have made to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. To fully understand how cities contribute to overall emission reductions, I believe that cities need to measure and report emission reductions from their climate change mitigation projects. Measurement and reporting help us understand potential cost savings from our projects, inform our decision-making processes and help us to identify risks and opportunities of projects.

The impact of climate change has a very real long-term impact on the sustainability and viability of cities and local economies. Accordingly, we all need to commit to the triple bottom line. Businesses and the City need to be responsible, in particular, when assessing projects we must take into account the impact on the environment when doing our cost-benefit analyses. As mentioned earlier, we are also looking at developing a green economy. Moreover, we are looking for green technologies and products in terms of green procurement. We are developing a green procurement strategy. We are also looking at introducing an innovative model to fund green projects. The City is looking at introducing a green bond, but this is still in its exploratory phase.

Programme Director,

At the COP 22 Conference in Morocco, the Mayor of Paris, Anne Hidalgo, urged that more needed to be done to support female leadership in tackling climate change. Her call was echoed by several other climate change leaders. Women are nurturers by nature. They have been taking the lead in climate change action to ensure environmental sustainability and protecting the needs of future generations for years without even realising it.

Women have always been responsible for ensuring that there is no wastage, everything is repurposed and reused. Dishes were washed with only as much water that was needed.

Whatever water was left was used in the vegetable garden. Kitchen scraps were used as compost in the garden. Tin cans and bottles made excellent storage containers and newspaper is used as cheap yet effective, disposable table clothes and shelf liners. All the food we ate was organic too, from meats to vegetables.

This scenario is not endemic to Durban or South Africa only, but rather to the African continent. This protective and minimalistic lifestyle is entrenched in many women today, especially those of the older generation, who would disapprove of the lavish and excessive modern way of living. We certainly need to take a leaf out of their book. The response to climate change depends on lifestyle choices and I urge young women to become trend setters for a "green lifestyle" especially in light of the many environmental challenges faced by the world today.

As women, we should be inspired by the likes of Professor Wangari Maathai, the founder of the Green Belt Movement and the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. Professor Maathai introduced the idea of community-based tree planting that developed into a broad-based grassroots organisation, the Green Belt Movement (GBM), whose main focus is poverty reduction and environmental conservation through tree planting.

I wish to quote her wise words, "We cannot tire or give up. We owe it to the present and future generations to rise up and walk". Unquote.

We all need to rise and walk together in support of the fight to tackle climate change. We want all of you to become “trepreneurs”!

Now is the time for action and leadership. Whilst climate change is mainly about the sustainability and future viability of cities, it is also about leaving a legacy that we all can be proud of.

As Ban Ki-moon, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations said, and I quote, **“We are the first generation to be able to end poverty, and the last generation that can take steps to avoid the worst impacts of climate change. Future generations will judge us harshly if we fail to uphold our moral and historical responsibilities.”**

Let us not disappoint and let down our children and grandchildren. Let’s take action now. Colleagues, now is clearly the time for leadership and action on climate change.

All the best with your workshop. I hope that it adds great value to you and your cities.

Thank you.