



**Speech by Mayor of eThekweni, Cllr Zandile Gumede  
at the occasion**

**Essence Festival Durban Business Seminar – Durban ICC**

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- Programme Director,
- The Former Chairperson of the African Union, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma
- His Excellency, the Ambassador, Honourable Andrew J Young,
- The Founder and President of the National Action Network USA, Mr Rev Al Sharpton;
- The President of Essence, Ms Michele Ebanks;
- Members of the Diplomatic corps
- Captains of the industry,
- Distinguished guests,
- Ladies and gentlemen,
- Members of the media,
- All protocol observed,

It is an honour for me to welcome you all to this Women Economic Empowerment session. We are pleased that you have honoured our invite to come and share wisdom with us on such an important topic, women empowerment.

By just looking at today's line-up of speakers and the topics to be discussed, I am confident that our women will leave much more empowered to take their role in the radical economic transformation agenda.

This Women Economic Empowerment conference is one of the many initiatives that we have allocated to drive an inclusive economic development programme. As the woman Mayor, I am proud to speak to ladies. When I leave office as a woman, I need to count the number of women that were empowered in eThekweni, directly or indirectly through my policy intervention. I am not apologetic about empowering of women, especially our African woman. Women must apply for senior management position in the city and must also tender for big projects. It is possible, this is the decade of a woman.

We believe that there can never be any sustainable economic development agenda, which is not centered on women and youth empowerment. Our view is that the full participation of women is necessary to long-term, sustainable economic growth and social progression.

To this effect, we have undertaken a number of programmes to give substantial support to women owned enterprises. These are sector specific programmes like the ICT sector, Furniture manufacturing, Maritime sector and the Construction industry.

We focused on soft skills like book-keeping, finance management, business management and Mentorship and Coaching.

These programmes were primarily aimed at empowering women within the Municipality and the province of KwaZulu-Natal.

We believe that women have a potential to change their own economic status, as well as that of the communities they live in.

One of the key advantages of this Women Economic Empowerment programme is that it has expanded our understanding of women's economic contributions as well as the hurdles that prevent them from being successful.

This has enabled us to create initiatives that are tailor-made to respond to the challenges of women.

These interventions have therefore provided a sizeable number of women in business with opportunities to participate and contribute meaningfully to the City's economy and that of the country.

Some of our success stories include one of our speakers here today, founder of **Seasons Network, Ms Bongi Shangase**, who started from our training programmes as an entry level entrepreneur.

Today Ms Shangase supplies some of the major retailers like Spar and Rhino supermarkets countrywide, with her beauty and cleaning products.

Through various partnerships, we have been able to empower women as economic agents and better their ability to access markets on competitive and equitable terms.

We believe that our coordinated efforts and partnerships in investing in women help speed up the development of local economies and create more equitable societies.

In order to create more women like Ms Shangase, in the recent past we have undertaken to do a number of other new programmes to empower women in business.

These include workshops called **Imbokodo Iyazenzela**, where we partnered with Ithala Bank to train women on aspects like access to finance, Book-keeping and access to markets.

In May this year, we also trained 110 women in Basic Computer Skills. They all received certificates are accredited by SETA.

We have also done **eThekwini Master Caterers Challenge Competition**, in partnership with the provincial Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs.

In this programme 41 women were trained on the basics of the hospitality sector and culinary skills.

Ladies and gentlemen, we have a long list of programmes which include the **New Venture Creation**, which we started in July this year to encourage women to come up with new and innovative business ideas.

Another sector that we have identified as key in driving this radical economic transformation agenda is the Tourism industry.

Research shows that a total tourism revenue of approximately R102.1 billion was injected in the South African economy in 2016.

This is an 11.1% increase compared to 2015 and almost 70% (R75.5 billion) was generated from international tourists

However, what is concerning is that the Tourism sector continues to remain untransformed and women are still the most underrepresented in strategic positions.

A research by GCIS reveals that within the global industry, women make up nearly 70% of the workforce.

However, when it comes to senior positions, women hold less than 40% of all managerial positions, less than 20% of general management roles and between 5-8% of board positions.

A Transformation study conducted in 2011 revealed that in a South Africa 77% of enterprises had no black female directors, and only 10% of large enterprises had the mandated 25% black women in senior management positions.

Ladies and gentlemen, we need to work together to ensure that this picture changes and that women are at the top of the tables, where they belong.

The Essence festival Durban is therefore one of our many efforts aimed at addressing these injustices against our women entrepreneurs.

In closing, programme director, most of our guests would know that government has decided name the year 2017 as the year of struggle stalwart, President O.R Tambo.

In this regard, allow me to close my welcome address by borrowing wisdom from President O.R Tambo, in his address to the Women's Session held in Luanda Angola in 1981.

In his closing remarks, President OR Tambo said "We need to move from revolutionary declarations to revolutionary practice..."

I chose this quote because I want emphasize a point that our discussions today must be guided by the fact that now is the time for decisive action to address women issues.

I am also glad that today we are joined by a Member of Parliament, Mama Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma. She is the most capable woman who has join the struggle of liberation since his youth. When he joined the

struggle, she was not an x-wife or boyfriend but a soldier who was prepared to die for this country.

We as woman must support Dr Dlamini-Zuma especially when she is being attacked. We must learn to support each other as women and also empower each other. When we climb a ladder of success, we are accused of sleeping with man or being x-wife of so and so. The reality is that woman are capable of running big companies and lead countries without the assistance of their husband. Just recently, Germany has elected Chancellor Engela Merkel for a fourth term. It is possible for a woman to lead. It is possible for woman to lead countries, churches, political parties and any sector of society. We are a majority and we need to hold each other's hand to succeed.

Mama, we would like to give you a message to national parliament that as the women of eThekwini and KwaZulu-Natal, WE ARE READY for women economic empowerment! We believe that women can lead such a programme. We have full confidence in yourself that you will be

I thank you.